100% INDEPENDENT PLAYSTATION 2 MAGAZINE

2005 HOLIDAY BUYERS GUIDE

THE BEST GAMES & GEAR

PSM

HOLIDAY 2005. ISSUE 105

PS3 VS. XBOX 360
The TRUTH
pg.12

KONG!

EXCLUSIVE REVIEW OF THE BEST MOVIE GAME EVER!

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HANDS-ON LARA!!!
TOMB RAIDER: LEGEND Kiss & Tell pg.44

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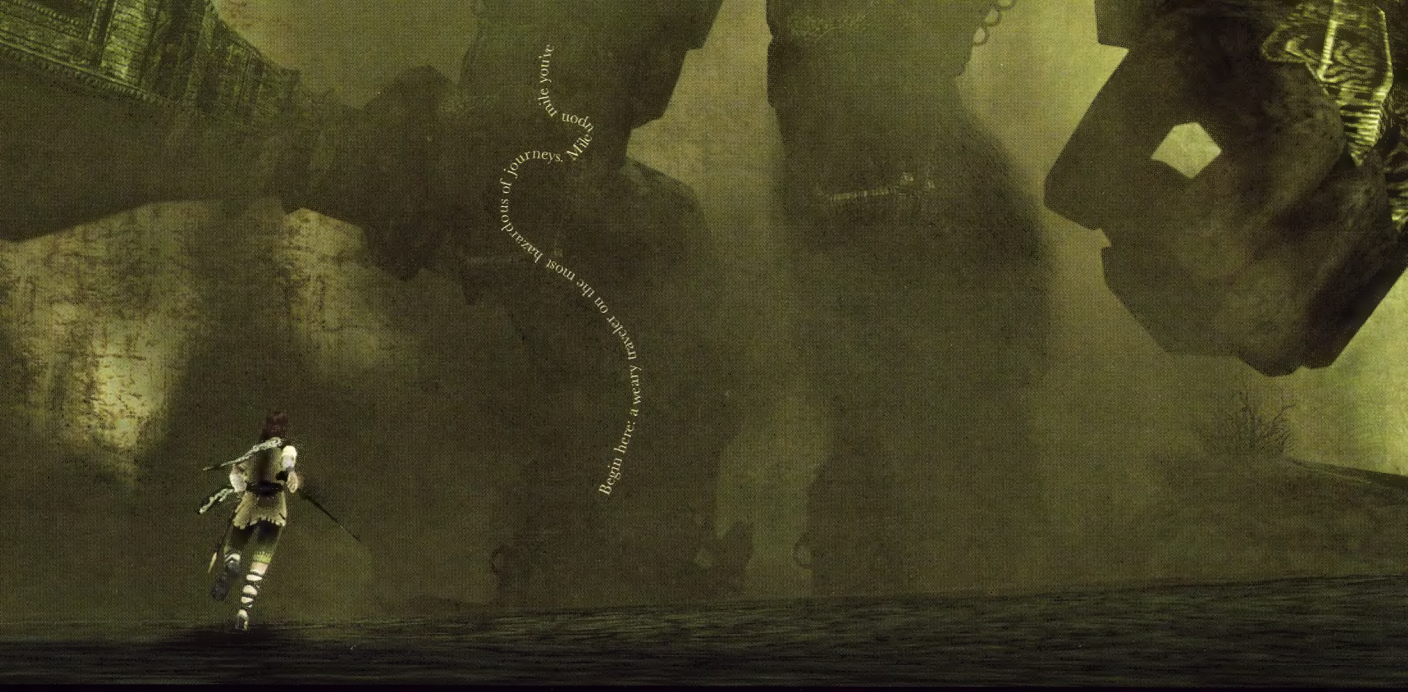

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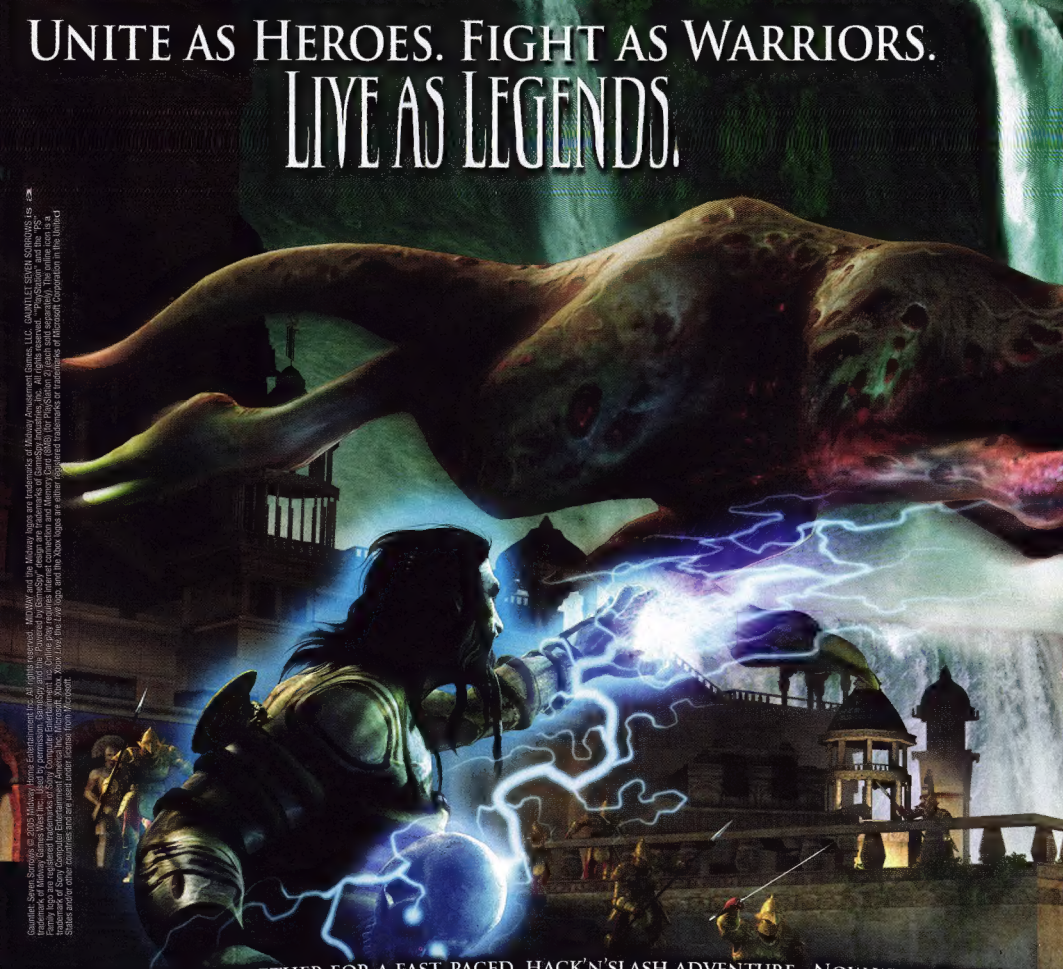

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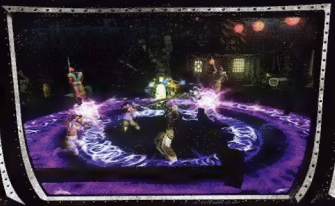

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FRONT PAGE

PSM
Holiday 2005 • Vol 9, No. 13 • Issue 105

MERRY (LAST) XMAS, PS2

As far as hard-core gamers are concerned, this will be PS2's last big Holiday season; next year, it's all about PS3. It's easy to see that Sony's current system is showing its age; despite a solid game lineup, there's no *Grand Theft Auto* or *Metal Gear Solid*-sized hit. I lined up for my PS2 at launch — in Japan — so the system peaked for me, personally, last year. Next month, all eyes are on the future and I, for one, absolutely can not wait!

CHRIS SLATE
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
http://chrisslate.blogspot.com

CHRIS SLATE
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

FAVORITE GAMES Platformers, action-adventure, arcade racing

SUCKER FOR Goofy games, NES-era nostalgia, cool character designs

OTHER INTERESTS Comics, anime, action flicks, hoops, drawing, fast food, *Bleach*

"As I write this, the Xbox 360 is still about a month away from launch. I've got high hopes for this system and its ability to give Sony some serious competition. Why? Because competition always favors the fans; nothing could give us better game experiences than a no-holds-barred cage match between Sony and Microsoft. As cool as the 360 will be, I get extra jazzed thinking of how PS3 will try its best to top it."

RANDY NELSON
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

FAVORITE GAMES Platformers, first-person shooters, racers

SUCKER FOR Retro remakes, 2D shooters, and anything by Hideo Kojima.

OTHER INTERESTS Anime, comics, action figures, my cats, Kari!

"*Khaaaaan!* Oh, sorry, didn't see you there. I was just reenacting my favorite bit from any of the *Star Trek* movies. You know, when Kirk screams Khan's name? Well, our cover this month made me think of it. Now everyone in the office is sick of hearing me scream *'Konnnng!'* in parody, so they've moved my desk outside. In other news, you *must* go see *Serenity*. It rocks, even without Ricardo Montalban."

ERIC BRATCHER
SENIOR EDITOR

FAVORITE GAMES *Blazing Lasers, Zork, Legend of Dragoon*

SUCKER FOR Mrs. Bratcher, pigs, muppets, kaiju, best guitar ever.

OTHER INTERESTS Winterizing! The dark side of home ownership.

"*Guitar Hero* has rekindled my passion to rock, so I've made an important decision: I'm outta here! I'm hittin' the road as a six-string cowboy, riding a steel horse, wanted dead or alive... Okay, maybe I'm kidding about that. But this is indeed my last issue of PSM. I'm moving on to work on another project here that you folks will hear about soon, if you haven't already. Thanks for all the fish. And the laughs. See you soon."

KAISER HWANG
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

FAVORITE GAMES *King Kong, Katamari*

SUCKER FOR Leica cameras I can't afford, Leica lenses I also can't afford

OTHER INTERESTS Gizmondo, Gizmondo, Gizmo, petting cats, Dune 7, Max Richter

"I just recently got myself a Gizmondo. Yes, that little device you've all sworn to hate since you last heard the company went out of business. Y'know what? I really like it. It's not as sleek as the PSP, but it's far more useful thanks to its GPS and SMS features. The ergonomics are also good, and the screen is more than capable. The one big issue is the lack of games, but hey, even the PSP has that problem. Now if only it had a phone..."

BILL DONOHUE
MANAGING EDITOR

"In an un-politically correct vein, I'd like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!"

CHRIS IMLAY
ART DIRECTOR

"Hi! I'm new here. Say... has anyone out there noticed that these guys are nuts? No, really..."

GARY LIEW
ASSOCIATE ART DIRECTOR

"Once again, the turkey is in the oven. Hopefully, this time it will eat the stuffing before it burns."

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PETER JACKSON'S KING KONG!!!

Everyone's favorite great ape makes his debut on the PS2. Our six-page review starts on page 60!

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SOULCALIBUR 3 CHARACTERS

Create your favorite videogame characters and have them duke it out in *SOULCALIBUR 3!* We show you how on page 24.

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PSM's Holiday Buyers Guide

It's that time again! Tell Santa what you want. The ultimate Holiday wish list is here on page 31.

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Metal Gear Solid 4 (PS3)

HEAD T

PLAYSTATION 3 VS. XBOX 360

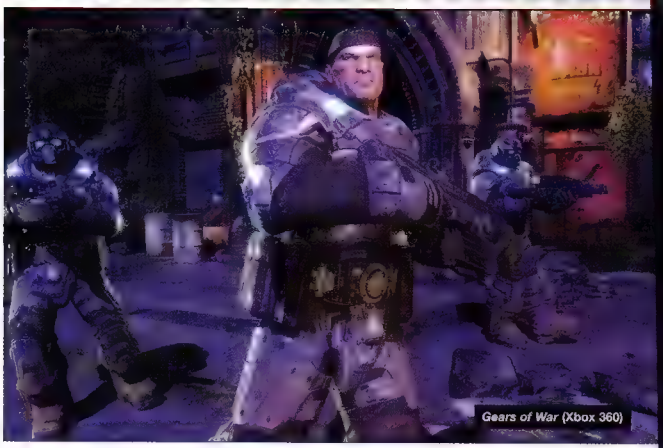
Microsoft says Sony has a real fight on its hands. PSM takes a closer look at the keys of the new console war

Boldly going where many have gone before, Microsoft, fresh off the launch of its next-generation console Xbox 360, is questioning Sony's ability to dominate this round of hardware. Its execs have even gone so far as to say they don't believe PS3 can even make it out in 2006. Tough talk is one thing, but they won't win this war. Neither will hardware power, neccessarily. Both systems have their advantages and disadvantages which will weigh heavily on the outcome.

Power and potential

PSM has spoken to numerous game developers working on both consoles, and, apart from some vocal standouts, they largely agree that PS3 has the raw technological advantage. Making the most of it won't be easy, but Sony is, according to game makers, providing some very good tools to tame this intricate beast. This falls right in line with Microsoft's XNA initiative, which provide Xbox 360 developers with load-easing tools to speed game building.

Right now, games exclusive to both systems are showcasing amazing potential. However, developers are already beginning to call into question Microsoft's decision to stick with the standard DVD format given the sheer amount of data required for next-gen games. *Head to head: While Xbox 360 provides a familiar environment for developers to work within, Sony is offering more power and good tools, which potentially will lead to greater creative freedom.*



HEAD

The Games and the glitz

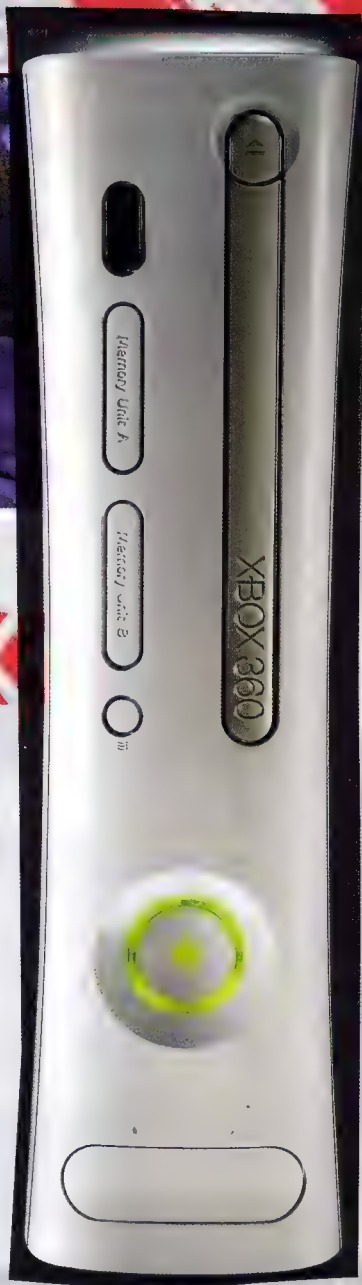
Which hardware is more powerful can be argued until you're blue in the face, but a console's success eventually comes down to two things: Its exclusive games and the marketing muscle behind it. Xbox was admittedly more powerful than PlayStation 2, but it couldn't catch up to Sony's strong brand and exclusives. *Head to head: This round, both companies are much closer in both respects, which is good for gamers. It means that Sony won't be able to merely count on its brand awareness and exclusives to stay on top. Expect to witness a war over game exclusives the likes of which hasn't seen since the 16-bit era. Sony's recent consolidation of its development studios is a clear sign that it realizes how important exclusive games of the highest quality are going to be. So far, it's leading Microsoft in this respect.*

Bringing gamers together

With PS2, it's been the developers, and not Sony, who've been responsible for bringing gamers together online. The results have been spotty at best. Even though only a fraction of Xbox owners are on Live, the integration and community aspects trump what seems like an afterthought on PS2. *Head to head: Going into the next generation, Xbox 360 is only improving on Live. Sony has an entire division working on PS3 online plans, but has nothing to show for it, yet. This could be one area where Microsoft is the clear leader, at least right out of the gate.*

For the win

Exclusive games, buzz factor, the best graphics... right now, PlayStation 3 has the three keys to keeping the ball in Sony's court. Retaining them will be harder this generation, and it's still not clear how much of an edge having Blu-Ray movie playback will provide. Microsoft isn't having to start from scratch, but it still has to make a strong case against waiting for PS3. Judging by the verbal shots it's already fired across Sony's bow, it's clear that we're in for a good fight. **PSM**



NEWS &VIEWS

THE NEWS: Working with its Tiburon studio, the developers of *Madden NFL Football*, EA Sports is readying the first *Madden* spin-off game for PS2. Aptly titled *NFL Head Coach*, the game will put players in the shoes (and hefty headphones) of an NFL coach. The goal: To become the greatest coach ever, of course. It hits shelves spring 2006.

THE VIEW: Soccer manager sims have been amazingly popular for years in the U.K. and the appeal of an NFL coach sim for hardcore football fans is hard to deny. Now, will EA release two versions of Madden next year, one including the latest version of *NFL Head Coach* for $20 dollars more? Hmm...

THE NEWS: Symantec, makers of the Norton Antivirus family of PC virus detection/removal utilities, has reported the existence of the first virus specifically designed to harm the PSP. Evidently, it has turned up in homebrew applications designed to be run via an exploit from Memory Stick. When run, the virus deletes key files and renders the PSP useless.

THE VIEW: If you run legal, homebrew programs on your PSP, make sure they're legit first. Some in the homebrew scene have suggested that Sony itself released the virus into the wild to curb PSP "hacking," but causing people to "brick" their PSPs would simply mean more headaches for Sony's customer support staff.

THE NEWS: Sony Pictures Digital has brought *Ratchet & Clank* to mobile phones as a 2D platformer. The game, released in late October, is available at www.sonypictures.com/mobile/ratchet

THE VIEW: How about a *Ratchet* game for PSP, while you're at it?

Datel's 4GB drive actually connects to the Memory Stick slot using the cable you can see in the above photo.

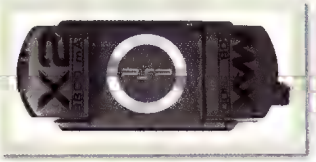
4GB PSP HDD

More space *and* twice the battery life? It's for real, but not from Sony

Just not feeling the love from that 2GB Memory Stick in your pimped-out PSP? Datel, maker of the Action Replay cheat device, has got your back with the most daring — and expensive — PSP add-on yet.

Selling for $199, its a combination four gigabyte micro drive and a 3600mAh battery that not only gives you more room for movies, music, pictures, and saves, but also doubles your play time. The HDD attaches to the PSP's backside and interfaces via a short cable plugged into the Memory Stick slot. It will void Datel's warranty, but hardware sleuths have already discovered that you can remove the micro drive from its housing and actually replace it with a larger capacity Compact Flash card, since they use the same interface.

Look for the bundle, which includes media conversion software and a USB 2.0 cable at Best Buy and Asian import specialist www.lik-sang.com.



With the HDD and double capacity battery installed, the PSP gains two very hefty hand grips. Datel says they won't feel clunky.

Kojima dons Snake's boots

Kojima and crew practiced urban combat, nighttime ops, and carried big guns.

He crawled through muck on his elbows and knees for *Snake Eater*, now legendary game maker Hideo Kojima is learning real urban combat for *Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of The Patriots*. Military advisor Motosada Mori took the Kojima Productions team to a special training site in Tochigi prefecture, about an hour from Tokyo. Besides room-to-room fighting, they also practiced at night — maybe a new clue about *MGS4*'s "ever-changing" setting?

PSM PLAYLIST

CHRIS

I'm currently in-between catching up on my *Sly 3* playing and starting a new run through *Resident Evil 4*. Even though I [illegible] the GameCube version months ago, I've been dying to dive into the new features on my PS2.

RAND

I've been playing the long-awaited videogame version of *Don Quixote*... I mean *Shadow of The Colossus*, it is a thing of beauty. So is *Gears*, the FPS that's making the Xbox 360 unbearable!

FEEL

It's been another month of great games finally arriving. I've been rocking with *Guitar Hero*, and shooting up a galaxy far, far away with *Star Wars Battlefront II*. I've also been pleasantly impressed with *Dragon Ball Z Budokai Tenkaichi*. And yeah, I've been playing both *Trauma Center: Under the Knife* and *Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney* for DS. PSP needs more creative stuff like this.

KAISER

Though I've already finished *King Kong*, I keep going back to it. That and *Shadow of the Colossus* are eating away at my life with no remorse. Will I even have the time or energy to ever play *GTA: LCS*, let alone finish it? The lowly world may never know.

JESSE

At this very moment, it's all about *SOULCALIBUR III* and *Gun*. Good stuff indeed. Of course, I'm really looking forward to *Black* and *MGS3: Subsistence*, but the game I want to play the most is *MGS4* — that game looks simply amazing.

READER PLAYLIST

[illegible]

Right now, I'm swinging in *Spider-Man* and kicking in *Mortal Kombat: Shaolin Monks*. I'm totally looking forward to *Soulcalibur III*, *Kingdom Hearts 2*, *The Warriors*, and [illegible] these of others.

FLY
AVIREX

INBOX

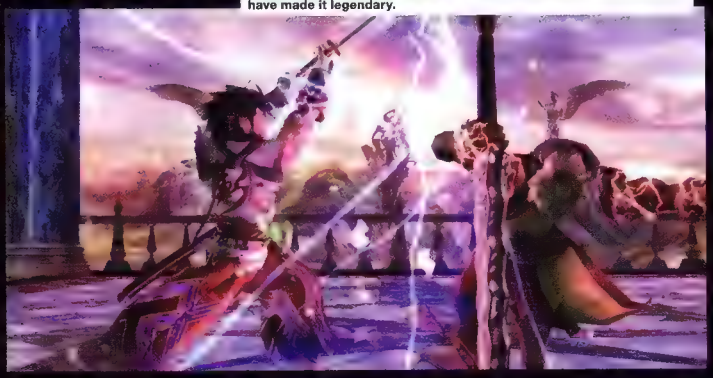
Have a question for the PSM team? Want to sound off about something we wrote? Visit psmonline.com to get in touch with us!

FIGHTIN' WORDS

Fellow fighting fans,
When it comes to fighting games, I'm a fanatic. My favorite game of the year is coming out, and it's *Soulcalibur 3*. The thing that gets me is why isn't this awesome game playable online? There are barely any fighting games that have online play. I know you guys and fans of the game are thinking the same thing. Sure, *Mortal Kombat* and *Marvel Nemesis* are fun, But *Soulcalibur 3* would have been much cooler. I hope that Namco makes *Soulcalibur 4* for PS3 playable online.
—Rodney Oliver, Jr., Clarksdale, MS

RANDY: You know, Rodney, that's the one thing I thought *SC3* was really missing, too. I mean, how great would it be to take all the characters you can create in the game and fight against other people's created characters? Pretty damn great, I'll tell ya. Unfortunately, fighters are extremely picky about timing, and even with broadband connections, lag can be a problem, especially in 3D fighters. That's why so few have it, particularly those developed in Japan. Hopefully Sony will really push online gaming an important part of every PS3 game so our dream will come true in *Soulcalibur 4*.

As amazing a game as *Soulcalibur III* is, Rodney's right: online would have made it legendary.



Hey PSM,
What if Marvel and DC both let down their pride and made a 2D *Marvel VS. DC* game? You know, with a lineup of their best characters. Just think: Spidey vs. Batman (Spidey being the winner, of course). Tell me your view.
—Chris Aiken, New York, NY

CHRIS: Of *course* it would be great, but of *course* it won't happen. Why must you torment me? Why don't you throw a few more hopeless fantasies in my face, huh? I used to want to draw comics and *that* never happened — why not bring *that* up?!

Hi guys!
I love the *Ratchet & Clank* games and my friend loves the *Zelda* games. So, the other day, I asked him whom he thought would win in a fight: Ratchet or Link? We couldn't decide on a winner, so I thought I'd ask you. So what do you think? Ratchet vs. Link... who would win?
P.S. Link gets all his weapons and Ratchet gets all of his. For Link's sake, we'll take all the R.Y.N.O.s and the Zodiac away. Thanks!
—Steve Cratty, Erie, PA

JUSTIN: Let's see — Ratchet has all the futuristic weaponry going for him, but Link has the Triforce of Courage, and he held his own against the entire roster of *Soul Calibur II*, which means he's definitely not a pushover. So who wins? Well, as much as I like Link, I think Ratchet wins this one because he's well armored, has a wide array of deadly, upgradeable weapons, and has Clank watching his back. Sorry, Link.

Dear PSM,
Due to his obvious popularity, many readers are in love with the awesome character that is Cloud. It has come to my conclusion, however, that some editors for the magazine have the habit of calling him "Cloud from *Kingdom Hearts*." While he was indeed in *Kingdom Hearts*, he played a minor roll and is insignificant in the game.

What do you have against calling him "Cloud from *Final Fantasy VII*"? I believe it is your duty, in all future subscriptions, to fix this error before it occurs again. Failure to do so will cause me to have to contact my lawyers. Thank you for your compliance.
—Matthew Delello, Winter Park, FL

RANDY: Uh... huh. I'm guessing you're talking about Cloud's numerous appearances in our Fandom section. Thing is, sometimes we get drawings of the *Kingdom Hearts* version of Cloud, which is actually different from how he looks in *Final Fantasy VII*. We also get plenty of *FFVII* Clouds. Whatever the case, we always point out which game each one is from. We've yet to get any *Advent Children* Clouds, but, when we do, we'll call him "Cloud from *FFVII: Advent Children*." Dude gets around.

ERIC: Hey, if you're going to call a lawyer to

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- Xbox.com

"*Halo* with chips"
- Maxim magazine

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SICK OF SEQUELS 2: THE SEQUEL

Fellas,
You guys have written a few times about how you're unhappy with the large amount of sequels being released (as opposed to new franchises). However, on other occasions you have openly advocated the production of sequels. I, too, want certain games to get sequels that will probably never be made. I think gamers in general should accept one key point on sequels — bad games rarely get sequels. For every *Tak and the Power of Juju 3* (three sequels?! What?!), we get a *Ratchet & Clank: Up Your Arsenal*. Come to terms with sequels. Embrace them. Now seriously, where is *Beyond Good and Evil 2*, Ubisoft?
—Terek Cattan, Chicago, IL

ERIC: Actually, Terek, we have no problem with sequels. The problem is that some companies insist upon cranking out a sequel each and every year, making only incremental improvements. We'd be a lot more into the latest *Dynasty Warriors*, *Tony Hawk*, *Jak*, *Ratchet*, or even *Splinter Cell* or *Need for Speed* if we weren't completely aware that we'll get another, slightly better one within 12 months. Sure, the games usually still turn out well, but we think they'd be much, much better if they only came out every two or three years, so there was time to really innovate and polish them. As it is, we're taking baby steps each year and it's wearing thin.

Now that Michel Ancel is done with *King Kong*, we can only hope he returns to *BG&E*.

sue us, may I recommend one? His name's Jack Thompson, and I hear he knows all about video games. I don't know his number, but if you Google his name, you'll probably find his email in there somewhere...

Dear fellow gamers,
Why do game designers make us press the Start button to begin a game? Could you imagine if every time you power on your pc, it popped up a screen saying "Do you want to start using the computer?" and you had to click yes or no? Everyone would be as annoyed as hell. I can't think of a technical / programming need to do this. Simply put up a nice splash screen for 20 seconds while the game is loading, and then take us directly to a main menu. As a programmer myself, I know that people want as few button presses as possible. A screen with exactly one option on it obviously isn't needed. While we're at it, rename the Start button to pause or menu or something.
—Kevin Dziulko

ERIC: ...please press START to have me answer this letter...

JUSTIN: Wow, that is annoying. You're totally right, Kevin. The whole industry should do it your way. Seriously.

Dear PSM,
I hate to bring this up for two reasons actually:
1) I don't want to piss off an 800 lb. gorilla;
2) I don't know if Bill was being sarcastic in his reply.

About your physics answer last month: that's not quite true. Along any radial segment, all points on that radius do actually travel at 33 RPM. The closer you get to the center, the slower the speed of the object is, as you pointed out: they are covering less distance.

The irony is that although all the points rotate at 33 RPM, the outermost dot is travelling at a faster speed because it's covering more distance per rotation.

I've been a PSM subscriber since Issue One. Keep up the good work :)
—Armen Voskeridjian, M.D.

BILL: Oh, sure... like I'm supposed to believe every guy who comes along who says he's a "doctor." Okay, if you're really a "doctor," what's the name of that wiggly thing that hangs down the back of your throat, huh, wiseguy? Why do we still have an appendix, "Doctor Smartass?" HOW MANY FINGERS AM I HOLDING UP, "DOCTOR KNOWITALL?!?" ACK! ACK!!! Must... drink... cold one...

Ask a Stupid QUESTION...

THE 800-POUND GORILLA GIVES YOU AN ANSWER!

READER: I have wondered through many of Bill's "hostile" crusades throughout the office if he has done any motion capturing for Rockstar games like *"GTA"* and the new one *"Bully."* No doubt in my mind Randy's head has met the toilet more than once, thanks to Bill.
-Nick Wineman, Cut Bank, MT

800-LB GORILLA: Well, Nick, it is true that I have been motion captured for videogames before, but not for the ones you mentioned. In fact, if you'd like to see what I look like in a videogame, go out and get yourself a copy of *Madden 2004*.

Start up the game and select the Raiders for the home team. Then select the Kansas City Chiefs for your opponent. Play the game and make sure that the Raiders are losing in the third quarter. Then point the camera around to the South end of the stadium and zoom in on the mezzanine walkway. See that guy in the silver and black T-shirt being dragged away in handcuffs by the two cops? That's me...

As far as Randy goes, I've never, ever pushed his head into the toilet! That's just mousse in his hair. It's strictly a bizarre coincidence that it smells like toilet deodorant cake... I'm peaceful... really...

RANTS & RAVES!

RANT: "I am hating how its attention *Devil May Cry 3* is getting. Games like *God of War* and *Metal Gear Solid 3* are stealing the action game spotlight. *Devil May Cry 3*, in my opinion, is the greatest action game ever made, and people aren't playing it. Part of the reason this is happening is because of *DMC3*'s "tremendous difficulty." In reality, the difficulty of the game really isn't as high as it's been exaggerated in reviews. Once you actually learn how to properly play the game, it's really is not that difficult. Anybody who stops playing this game after the second level because it just too difficult is really missing out on an amazing action game, and if you like videogames, you owe it to yourself to play it."
—Nick F., Holbrook, AZ

RANT: "PSP infrastructure. Xlink Kai can do it... why can't the developers? I really like playing against humans, they are the best AI possible (I guess 'cause they aren't AI). If Xlink can get PSP games running online by tunneling, why can't the developers get them running by using infrastructure and skip a few lagging steps?"
—Jonathan Schnell, Lancaster, Canada

RANT: "I hate the way many truly classic games get ignored and looked over. Games like *Beyond Good and Evil*, *Ico*, the upcoming *Shadow of the Colossus*, and *Dark Cloud* aren't getting the chance they deserve. Just show a couple of commercials, for goodness' sake!" ***—Smile***

RAVE: "When I flipped to page 25 of last issue, I thought: 'Why is there a picture of an old guy here?' for about three seconds. Then, 'Holy $#@!! That's Otacon! Kojima just keeps coming!" ***—Jim Kamatchus, Hilton, WA***

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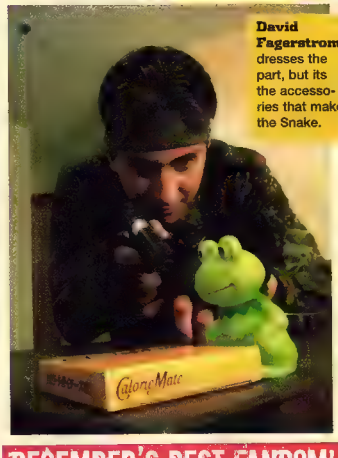
FANDOM

Step up and share your mad love for PS2 with the world!

We think Naughty Dog's art department would be proud of what **C.R. Majors** has done with Jak and Daxter, circa *Jak II*.

Andrew McWhorter did this unique take on Devil Jin from *Tekken 5*.



David Fagerstrom dresses the part, but its the accessories that make the Snake.

DECEMBER'S BEST FANDOM!

The PSM Prize Pack for this issue goes to **PETERSON PHISCIEN** for his excellent illustration of Cloud from *Final Fantasy VII*. Not Cloud from *Kingdom Hearts*. Really.

HIT US WITH YOUR BEST STUFF!

Get over to **psmonline.com** and submit your displays of fandom — fan art, cosplay, custom toys... you name it, we want it! The best of the best will be displayed here each issue!

WIN!

Every issue, PSM's editors will choose the best entry from the previous month. The lucky winner will receive a free one year subscription to the online videogame rental service GameFly (a $300 value, www.gamefly.com). In addition, everyone who gets their fandom printed will receive a GameFly hat or T-shirt for their effort.

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Create PlayStation's All-Stars in Soul Calibur III

Snake vs. Cloud? Dante vs. Obi-Wan? We show you how!

The legend of *Soul Calibur III* will never die — especially when you consider its surprisingly deep create-a-character mode. Inspired by the mountains of reader mail we receive asking if there will ever be a fighting game starring PlayStation's greatest characters, we decided to end the wait right now. After a few days of playing and tinkering, we've re-created just a few legends to play as; we're sure there are many more to be made. We've got the complete rundown on how to create all of the characters you see here, including the job type they need to be assigned. Just remember: not every item you need is available right away. Oh, and we used Japanese voices — they just sound so much better. Check out our full review of SC3 on page 74!

SC3's character customization mode is a huge addition to the series.

Rayden

Job: Saint
Weapon: Staff (Mushakuboh)
Head: Shade (08,17)
Hair: Long Straight (01,18)
Lower Torso: Sleeveless Shirt (01,01)
Mid Torso: Monk's Garb (23,23)
Arms: Traveler's Gauntlets (01,27)
Waist: Dougi-Obi (01,01)
Upper Legs: Matabiki (01,14 / 01,14)
Socks: Tabi (01,13)
Face: 13
Eyebrows: 05,17
Eyes: 01,14
Skin: 05,17
Voice: Man

Kazuya

Job: Barbarian
Weapon: Grieve Edge (Kick Edge)
Hair: Styled Back (01,27)
Arms: Leather Gloves (03,19)
Waist Dougi-Obi (01,01)
Upper Legs: Slacks (07,12)
Feet: Leather Long Boots (01,27)
Face: 02
Eyebrows: 01,01
Eyes: 05,27
Skin: 05,20
Voice: Young Man 2

Here, we decided to pit representatives of two wildly different fighting game series against each other: *Mortal Kombat* and *Tekken*. We picked Rayden *(MKII* version) and *Tekken 2*'s version of Kazuya. Namco had to see this coming: Kazuya's hair is perfect!

Watching these two battle it out in *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children* before playing *Soul Calibur III* was a real double-whammy of awesomeness. After seeing the film, we just had to get two of the greatest *Final Fantasy* characters ever into the game. The results were great — there's even a perfect sword for Cloud.

Cloud Strife

Job: Barbarian
Weapon: Iron Sword (Demon Knife)
Hair: Medium Hard (08,18)
Lower Torso: Sleeveless Shirt (25,02)
Arms: Bandit's Gloves (04,25)
Shoulders: Metal Shoulders (01,08)
Neck: Scarf (02,23)
Waist: Large Belt (04,25)
Upper Legs: Leather Pants (25,02)
Feet: Buckled Boots (04,25)
Face: 04
Eyebrows: 07,26
Eyes: 25,26
Skin: 05,20
Voice: Young Man 1

Sephiroth

Job: Samurai
Weapon: Katana (Shiranui)
Hair: Long Straight (01,07)
Upper Torso: Magician's Coat (01,27 / 01,27)
Arms: Leather Gloves (01,01)
Shoulders: Shoulder Armor (01,10)
Waist: Leather Belt (01,27)
Upper Legs: Tapered Pants (01,27)
Feet: Leather Long Boots (01,27)
Face: 07
Eyebrows: 01,05
Eyes: 17,23
Skin: 05,17
Voice: Young Man 2

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AS THE DARK PRINCE...

Just for fun, we modeled our Solid Snake after his older self in *MGS4: Guns of The Patriots*. With some minor tweaking, you can make a younger Snake. Yes, we know his "Solid Eye System" is on the wrong eye, but *SC3's* editor doesn't let you swap it. We couldn't get Ocelot or Raiden looking right, so we did Meryl instead. Now we can play out what might happen when they meet on the battlefield in *MGS4!*

Solid Snake

Job: Ninja
Weapon: Kunai (Kunai)
Head: Headband (26,01)
Hair: Crew Cut (01,21)
Mask: Eye Patch (01,01)
Chin: Samurai Moustache (02,21)
Lower Torso: Undershirt (01,27)
Upper Torso: Lord's Armor (01,04)
Arms: Leather Gloves (01,25)
Waist: Leather Belt (01,23)
Upper Legs: Hunter's Pants (01,01)
Shins: Master Shin Guards (01,01)
Feet: Cloth Shoes (01,01)
Face: 13
Eyebrows: 01,21
Eyes: 01,27
Skin: 05,17
Voice: Old Man

Meryl

Job: Thief
Weapon: Dagger (Jambiya)
Hair: Shaggy Layered (03,22)
Lower Torso: Body Suit (01,27)
Arms: Bandit's Gloves (01,02 / 01,27)
Waist Carrying Belt (01,27)
Upper Legs: Long Pants (12,26)
Feet: Protective Boots (04,26 / 08,16)
Face: 06
Eyebrows: 05,03
Eyes: 14,24
Skin: 05,17
Voice: Girl 1

Dante

Job: Sword Master
Weapon: Iron sword (Alondite), grieve edges, and nunchucks
Hair: Medium Hard (01,16)
Upper Torso: Magician's Coat (02,21 / 02,21)
Arms: Knuckle Gloves (01,27)
Upper Legs: Leather Pants (08,25)
Feet: Buckled Boots (01,01)
Face: 02
Eyebrows: 01,22
Eyes: 24,19
Skin: 05,17
Voice: Young Man 2

Vergil

Job: Samurai
Weapon: Katana (Shiranui)
Hair: Crew Cut (01,16)
Mid Torso: Cotton Shirt (01,01)
Lower Torso: Sleeveless Shirt (25,02)
Upper Torso: Magician's Coat (22,23 / 22,23)
Arms: Knuckle Gloves (05,18)
Upper Legs: Slacks (01,01)
Feet: Holy Boots (07,23)
Face: 02
Eyebrows: 01,22
Eyes: 24,19
Skin: 05,17
Voice: Young Man 2

The twin sons of Sparda make for perfect sword-wielding characters in *Soul Calibur III*. Just because they look alike in the face doesn't mean that creating their costumes was a snap. Chris and Randy debated the color of Dante's pants for what seemed like forever. We made Dante a Sword Master so he can just any weapon. He looks just as cool using nunchucks as he does swinging his sword.

One look at *SC3's* lava level and we knew which two characters we had to make to fight in it. So, from a glaxy far, far away come the *Episode III* versions of Obi-Wan Kenobi and Anakin Skywalker. Sadly, there are no energy blades in the game, but kocking Ani into the lava while blasting "Duel of The Heroes" is really satisfying.

Obi-Wan

Job: Sage
Weapon: Chinese Blade (Heisheng Jian)
Hair: Gelled Back (06,23)
Chin: Warrior's Beard (06,23)
Lower Torso: Undershirt (05,25)
Mid Torso: Warrior's Robe (08,16)
Waist: Bandit's Belt (06,24)
Upper Legs: Leather Pants (06,17)
Feet: Leather Boots (06,21)
Face: 06
Eyebrows: 06,23
Eyes: 23,04
Skin: 05,17
Voice: Young Man 2

Anakin

Job: Sword Master
Weapon: Rapier (Rapier)
Hair: Long Perm (06,23)
Chin: Scar (02,06)
Lower Torso: Undershirt (01,01)
Mid Torso: Warrior's Robe (05,26)
Arms: Leather Gloves (01,02)
Waist Carrying Belt (01,25)
Upper Legs: Leather Pants (01,27)
Feet: Leather Boots (01,27)
Face: 06
Eyebrows: 05,25
Eyes: 24,04
Skin: 05,17
Voice: Young Man 1

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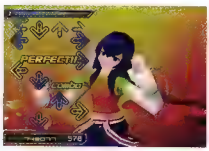
Artists Include:

Fatboy Slim • Sean Paul • Sneaker Pimps • Delerium • The Chemical Brothers • Armand Van Helden • And Many More



MusicInEveryDirection.com

KONAMI

EXPERIENCE THE BRUTAL

EPIC STORYLINE

MASSIVE STREAMING WORLD

www.GUNTHEGAME.com

MATURE 17+

Blood and Gore
Intense Violence
Sexual Themes
Strong Language
Use of Alcohol

ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

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PlayStation.2

ITY THAT WAS THE WEST

DIVERSE ACTION PACKED MISSIONS

COMBAT ON HORSEBACK

XBOX

XBOX 360.

NINTENDO GAMECUBE.

PC CD-ROM SOFTWARE

NEVERSOFT

ACTIVISION.

activision.com

MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood
Intense Violence
Sexual Themes
Strong Language
Use of Drugs and Alcohol

PlayStation.2

XBOX

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PSM's Holiday 2005 Essentials

YOU CAN'T END THE YEAR WITHOUT OWNING THESE GAMES AND GEAR!

It's that time of year again. Those last short weeks where every company tries to shove their games onto shelves in time for the holiday rush. It should be a wonderland for gamers, but it really just ends up making finding great games like trying to separate the gems from the junk.

It's a good thing that PS2 has lots of games... but that also means there are plenty of mediocre titles to contend with. There are PS2s we've already wasted through the festering crew of holiday gaming mediocrity. We didn't do it for fun (trust us, it wasn't) but we did it so you don't have to. (Awwww...)

If you've been reading our reviews for the past year, you already know what to avoid. Just consider this a refresher. If you haven't, think of the following pages to be your very own survival guide to avoiding a shitty videogame crisis.

No matter what type of gamer you are, we've got something great for you. If you already have our top pick, we've got some of your alternates. Whatever the case, you can't go wrong with these essential games. These are the only ones that every PS2 fan should own.

Resident Evil 4

Published By: CAPCOM
ESRB Rating: MATURE
Price: $39.99

The rest of the games in this guide are arranged, more or less, by a particular genre. *Resident Evil 4* is technically an action-adventure game, but it's just so damn good we had to separate it from everything else. Simply put, if you're only going to get one of PS2's big holiday games, this is it. Anyone old enough to play M-rated games needs to own *RE4*. You don't even have to be a big horror buff to enjoy it; anyone who likes great action movies will love it. It's innovative, challenging, thrilling, and eye-popping. It's one of those rare games you'll remember every moment of for years to come.

ABSOLUTE CONTROL

LOGITECH CORDLESS ACTION CONTROLLER

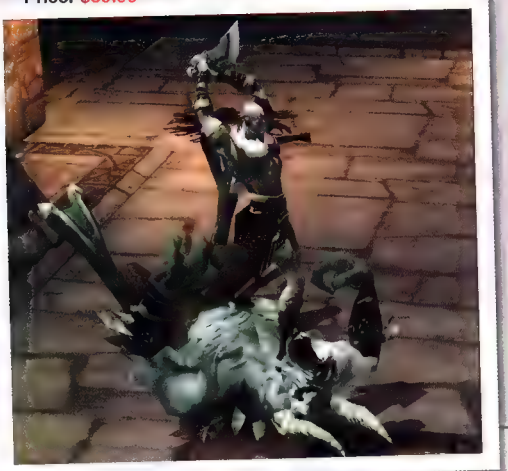
Made By: LOGITECH
Price: $39.99

Every year since its release, Logitech's gift to gamers' hands has been the one and only accessory we demand that all gamers must have. It's simply the best controller you can get. It feels better than the Dual Shock 2 and it's wireless. Get it. Love it. Thank us later.

God of War

Published By: SONY CEA
ESRB Rating: MATURE
Price: $39.99

Created by David Jaffe, the rising star of game development behind *Twisted Metal Black*, this epic action-adventure game mixes Hollywood-level production values with the most rock-solid combat ever seen in this type of game. From the burning ruins of Athens to the bowels of Hades, the battle between anti-hero Kratos and god of war Ares never lets up — and never tries the same gameplay tricks twice. The setting may be ancient Greece, but the experience is totally fresh.



GOT IT? GET THESE!

DEVIL MAY CRY 3

Published By: CAPCOM
ESRB Rating: MATURE
Price: $49.99

If you've craved hot Asian electronica, crazy cool demas, amazing combat, and heinous challenges, DMC delivers on every level.

PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE TWO THRONES

Published By: UBISOFT
ESRB Rating: MATURE
Price: $49.99

With [illegible] charged action, and entire city within which to perform mind-blowing acrobatic feats.

King Kong

Published By: UBISOFT
ESRB Rating: TEEN
Price: $49.99

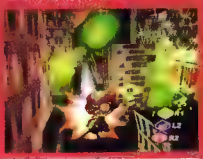
Yes, we really are recommending a movie tie-in game as one of our must-haves for the year. The reason? Simply put, the game is great. Better than great; it's outstanding. Created by Michel Ancel, the genius behind *Rayman* and *Beyond Good and Evil*, it's a combination first-person *adventure* and all-out action fest that looks as close as possible to the Peter Jackson film. That's because Ubisoft worked with Jackson's Weta Digital and Weta Workshop art department and special effects gurus to actually put all of their original material — from rock textures to Kong himself — into the game. The end result: You are *in* the movie. In danger. Having to use your wits as a human, and your might as Kong.

GOT IT? GET THESE!

SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS

Published By: SONY CEA
ESRB Rating: Teen
Price: $49.99

The premise is [illegible] You slay giants. The gameplay is deep. Part platformer, part puzzle. From the team that made *ICO*, it's not to be missed.

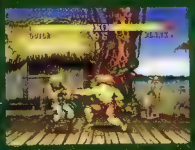


PSYCHONAUTS

Published By: MAJESCO
ESRB Rating: TEEN
Price: $49.99

With [illegible] forming at its core, its strong adventure element and Pixar-quality story and characters elevate it to something truly special.

CLASSIC ACTION



CAPCOM CLASSICS COLLECTION

Published By: CAPCOM
ESRB Rating: EVERYONE 10+
Price: $19.99

This mega-collection is an absolute steal at only $20 for 22 games, including *Street Fighter II* (plus *Champion Edition* and *Hyper Fighting*) and the entire *Ghosts 'N Goblins / Ghouls 'N Ghosts* series. Any one of those games is worth the price of admission alone!

Burnout Revenge

Published By: ELECTRONIC ARTS
ESRB Rating: EVERYONE 10+
Price: $49.99

It might not have real tracks or hundreds of cars, but the latest *Burnout* has what *really* matters in a racing game: Incredible fun. It's also incredibly fast, incredibly pretty, and feels incredibly great to control. Sim, schmim — no amount of car tuning or broadcast style replays could make up for *Burnout Revenge's* excellent course design (now with shortcuts galore), crazier takedowns (now with brutal vertical slams), and an even better, even nastier Crash Mode. If you like racers that are fast, fun, and packed with awesome looking (even if they aren't real) cars, this is the one to get.

GOT IT? GET THIS!

MIDNIGHT CLUB 3: DUB EDITION

Published By: ROCKSTAR GAMES
ESRB Rating: EVERYONE 10+
Price: $49.99

Rockstar's [illegible] racing on PS2, and it's pretty much perfected the formula in DUB Edition.

SOULCALIBUR III

Published By: NAMCO
ESRB Rating: TEEN
Price: $49.99

Going back to the original *Soul Edge* on PSone, the best 3D weapons-based fighting game series has come out of Namco. Now on its third game, the *SOULCALIBUR* series continues the trend, looking prettier, boasting more characters, and topped off with a surprisingly deep conquest and character creation mode. The game plays great, but it's the loads of bonus modes and material that put it over the top with crazy replayability. This isn't just a great multiplayer game; it's one of the greatest fighters for solo players ever conceived.

GOT IT? GET THIS!

TEKKEN 5

Published By: NAMCO
ESRB Rating: TEEN
Price: $49.99

This flagship PlayStation series goes back to its roots for one hell of a great fighter that everyone who loves the genre should own.

Star Wars Battlefront II

Published By: LUCASARTS
ESRB Rating: TEEN
Price: $49.99

The best-selling game to come out of that galaxy far, far away didn't just fly off shelves because it said *"Star Wars"* on the box. The original *Battlefront* was one of the best "grand combat" games on PS2. Its sequel, as if you hadn't guessed by its inclusion in this guide, is even better. Way better. Sure, it looks and sounds nicer, but it really ups the ante with much better battlefields, tightened up gameplay, playable heroes — Jedi, Sith, and other famous characters — and, topping it all off, space combat. Not just space combat though, but the ability to battle on foot, hop into a starfighter, and blast your way towards landing on another ship, continuing the on foot fighting there. Brilliant, just brilliant, online or off.

GOT IT? GET THESE!

SOCOM 3: U.S. NAVY SEALS
Published By: SONY CEA
ESRB Rating: MATURE
Price: $29.99

The series that kicked off PS2's online experience is back with its best maps and gameplay yet, not to mention the addition of vehicles to the mix.

BATTLEFIELD 2: MODERN COMBAT
Published By: EA GAMES
ESRB Rating: TEEN
Price: $49.99

It's an on foot and in vehicle arcade-style Army shooter. It's a serious squad-based online shooter. It's really great. It's fun.

Mercenaries

Published By: LUCASARTS
ESRB Rating: TEEN
Price: $29.99

The tagline *"Playground of Destruction"* couldn't have been more appropriate for *Mercenaries*. On second thought, maybe *"Grand Theft Battlefield"* might have been an even better descriptor. Big-ass battlefields, 52 wanted war criminals, and an alpha to zed list of weapons and vehicles to commandeer make this very successful attempt at open-ended combat a (ahem) total blast from beginning to end. You'll spend as much time messing around with trying new ways to destroy things as you will completing the main objectives. Truly a time-waster of the best kind.

GOT IT? GET THIS!

DESTROY ALL HUMANS!
Published By: THQ
ESRB Rating: Teen
Price: $49.99

Key giant, mind control, and tons of dark humor help to make this open-ended action game a totally fresh and fun alternative to playing a wannabe super spy.

SNEAKY TREAT

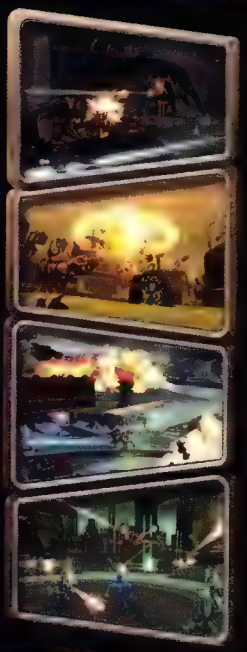
SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY
Published By: UBISOFT
ESRB Rating: MATURE
Price: $29.99

Wannabe super spies can still get their stealth on in the exceptional *Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory*. A tense experience not to be missed.

IN THIS GALACTIC BATTLE ARENA, ONLY ONE WILL SURVIVE.

RATCHET DEADLOCKED

Captured by a deranged media mogul, you're now forced to compete for your life in the scarred arena of an underground game show. The good news? You're not alone. You've got badass robot friends to help blast you through anything. Because it's not just how you fire your weapons, it's how you fire your commands.



www.us.playstation.com
www.rcarsenal.com

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Fantasy Violence
Mild Language

online BROADBAND ONLY

INSOMNIAC

PlayStation 2

LIVE IN YOUR WORLD. PLAY IN OURS.

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Dragon Quest VII: Journey of the Cursed King

Published By: SQUARE ENIX
ESRB Rating: TEEN
Price: $49.99

What's a role-playing game fan supposed to do in a year without a new *Final Fantasy* to lose their social lives to? Why not dive into the greatest RPG series most Americans have never played? There's a reason the *Dragon Quest* series has caused campouts on launch eves in Japan: It's phenomenal. *DQVII*, when it finally hit PSone, was definitely dated looking, but still totally epic. Part eight is right at home on PS2. Its gorgeous visuals are the work of *Dragonball* creator Akira Toriyama, the story and cope of the game is epic, and the accompanying symphonic score is fitting. Do yourself a huge favor: Even if you've never heard of *Dragon Quest*, *get this game*. It's everything that's good about the RPG genre, and then some.

GOT IT? GET THIS!

SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI: DIGITAL DEVIL SAGA 2

Published By: ATLUS
ESRB Rating: MATURE
Price: $49.99

This role-playing game is basically *Final Fantasy X* with a cyber-goth setting, moody spiral-art design, and dual-sword ninja interactions.

Guitar Hero

Published By: RED OCTANE
ESRB Rating: TEEN
Price: $69.99 W/ GUITAR

Dance Dance Revolution made us dance our booties. *Karaoke Revolution* shattered glasses nationwide. Now we can get our thrash on with PS2's first U.S. guitar game — with controller — that totally RAWKS! From Black Sabbath's *"Iron Man"* to Queen's *"Killer Queen,"* the hard-rockin' song lineup is stellar, and the gameplay, quite similar to another PS2 music game great, Amplitude, is spot on using the five-fret guitar controller. Not only should anyone who likes music games (or fun, for that matter) get this one, they should also get a second guitar controller for some totally mad two-player guitar battles. Rock on!

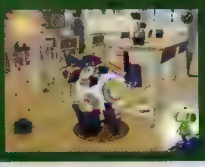
GOT IT? GET THIS!

KARAOKE REVOLUTION PARTY

Published By: KONAMI
ESRB Rating: EVERYONE
Price: $29.99

Get those lungs [illegible]. While you're at it, plug in your eyes and...dance pad?! Grab the mic, [illegible] and get ready to party.

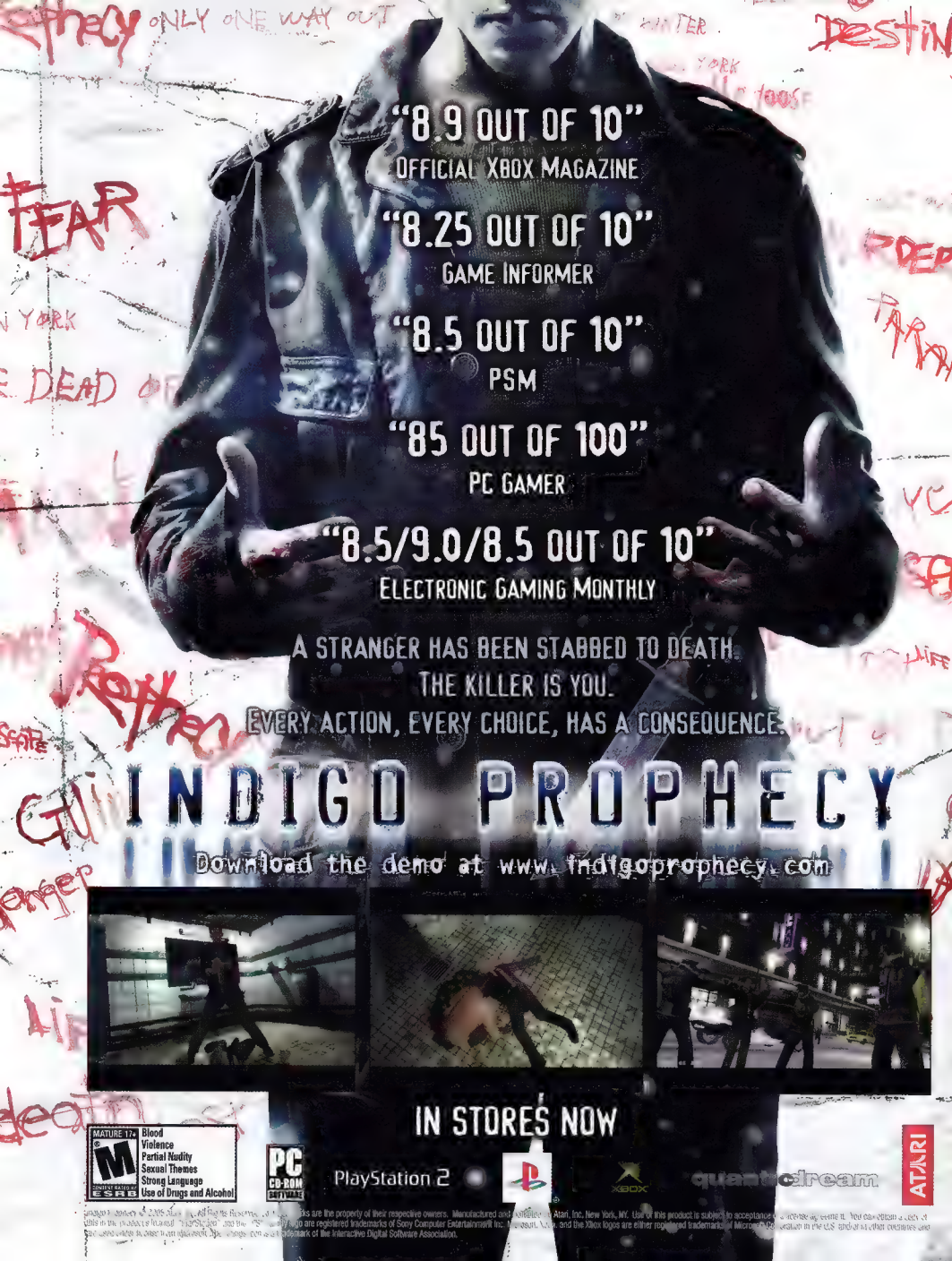
ON A ROLL



WE LOVE KATAMARI

Published By: NAMCO
ESRB Rating: EVERYONE
Price: $29.99

We love *Katamari Damacy*. We love *We Love Katamari*. You'll love *We Love Katamari*. Your friends will love *We Love Katamari*. You can love *We Love Katamari* together. Show *We Love Katamari* love.



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NBA Street V3

Published By: EA SPORTS BIG
ESRB Rating: EVERYONE
Price: $49.99

Nobody said sports games have to be realistic to be fun. If they did, we'd shove a copy of *NBA Street V3* into their hands, lock 'em in a room with it, and make them play until they see the light. You won't have more fun with a sports game this year, b-ball or otherwise. The series' mad moves and trick system have been made even better, creating ballers ands courts is ace, and going online to show off your skills works like a charm. Playing alone or, better yet, with friends is one of the most fun gaming experiences you'll have all year. Heck, you don't even have to like basketball to love this!

OUR TOP SPORTS PICKS

Basketball:
NBA Live 06
Published By: EA Sports
ESRB Rating: Everyone
Price: $49.99

Football:
NCAA Football 06
Published By: EA Sports
ESRB Rating: Everyone
Price: $49.99

Golf:
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 06
Published By: EA Sports
ESRB Rating: Everyone
Price: $49.99

Soccer:
Winning Eleven 8
Published By: Konami
ESRB Rating: Everyone
Price: $49.99

Boxing:
Fight Night Round 2
Published By: EA Sports
ESRB Rating: Teen
Price: $49.99

PSP Essentials: Games

Grand Theft Auto: Liberty City Stories
Published By: Rockstar Games
ESRB Rating: Mature
Price: $49.99

Everything that makes the GTA games some of the best ever, only smaller. But not in scope, this is a console-class adventure all the way.

Hot Shots Golf: Open Tee
Published By: Sony CEA
ESRB Rating: Everyone
Price: $39.99

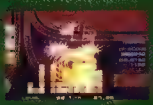
Certainly not boring. Totally addictive. Great character customization and classic Hot Shots gameplay in the hand. What's not to love?

Ridge Racer
Published By: Namco
ESRB Rating: Everyone
Price: $39.99

Arcade racing at its best. Drifting has never felt so good. Classic tracks from every *Ridge Racer* takes it over the top.

Wipeout Pure
Published By: Sony CEA
ESRB Rating: Everyone
Price: $39.99

Super-fast racing. With weapons. In the future. Plus, the free downloadable ships and tracks rock.



Lemmines
Published By: Ubisoft
ESRB Rating: Everyone
Price: $39.99

It's a puzzle game. It's a music game. It's both and damned good. Your battery will die long before your urge to keep playing.

Burnout Legends
Published By: Electronic Arts
ESRB Rating: Everyone
Price: $49.99

Super fast racing. With crazy crashes. It's the best of the best of the Burnout series all on one PSP disc.

PSP Essentials: Accessories

Hori screen filter
Made By: Hori
Price: $4.99 (ebgames.com)

This crystal-clear sheet of plastic is cheap, easy to apply (just have some scotch tape handy), and protects your precious PSP screen without affecting the picture. It can also make minor scratches disappear. Bonus!

Pelican HBA-115 PSP Travel Case
Made By: Pelican Accessories
Price: $9.99

This rugged case isn't any wider than the PSP, but is big enough to hold the system, two Memory Sticks, and six UMDs safely and securely.

1GB and 2GB Memory Sticks
Made By: Sandisk
Prices: $67.99 and $159.99

If you're going to really put your PSP to its best use, you need a nice big Memory Stick. Either of SanDisk's gig-plus sticks will suit your needs nicely, and they're really coming down in price.

THE #1 SELLING RPG

AVAILABLE FOR THE PSP™ (PlayStation® Portable) System*

1 OUT OF EVERY 6 PSP™ (PlayStation® Portable) System OWNERS PURCHASED UNTOLD LEGENDS*

"If you're looking for another fun multiplayer game, Untold Legends is definitely for you."
Gaming-Age.com

"Untold Legends: Brotherhood of the Blade is a necessary purchase for any action-RPG fan."
GameZone.com

Available at your local retailers

GameStop · city · BEST BUY · EB GAMES

TEEN T Fantasy Violence
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

PlayStation Portable

www.untoldlegends.com

SOE SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT

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*Based on total industry sales of the PSP™ system through ... 2006. According to the NPD Group.

NEVER BUY A BAD GAME AGAIN!

As a hardcore gamer you want to play the latest games and play them the day they release, but with new games costing upwards of fifty dollars and more - and dozens of new games hitting retail shelves every week, it's simply impossible to keep track of them all, much less afford them. The solution? GameFly.com.

AS SIMPLE AS 1, 2, 3...

1. Go to **gamefly/psm.com** and sign up for the **FREE** trial. Select up to ten games, put the ones you want the most at the top. Your list or Game Q is a list of games that you want to play, if a game on your list isn't available, the next game on the list will be sent out to you (fyi: first choices are fulfilled over 95% of the time).

2. Once you get your games keep them as long as you want - **there are no due dates and no late fees. (You don't pay any shipping charges, GameFly takes care of that for you.)**

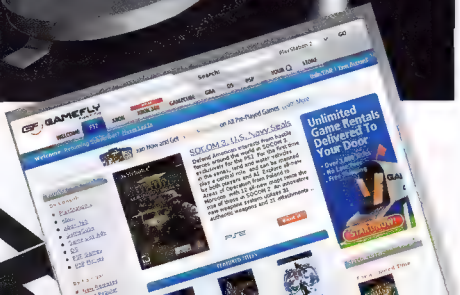
3. As soon as you finish with a game that's been sent to you, return it and the next game in your Game Q is sent out to you.) It's that easy.

Founded in 2002 by gamers like you, GameFly.com gives you unlimited access to a library of games that is unmatched by any other retailer or online service. GameFly.com stocks virtually every new title for every game platform, even PSP UMD movies. Now for one low monthly fee of $21.95 you can play any game, any time, as long as you want.

SO MANY GAMES, SO MUCH TIME.

With so many games how do you keep track of them all? You don't, GameFly.com does that for you. GameFly.com tracks the latest releases and keeps you on top of every release (including the hottest hits) through their monthly newsletter and website. GameFly.com also provides reviews through a partnership with GameSpot and IGN so if you're looking for insight or recommendations, GameFly.com provides that too.

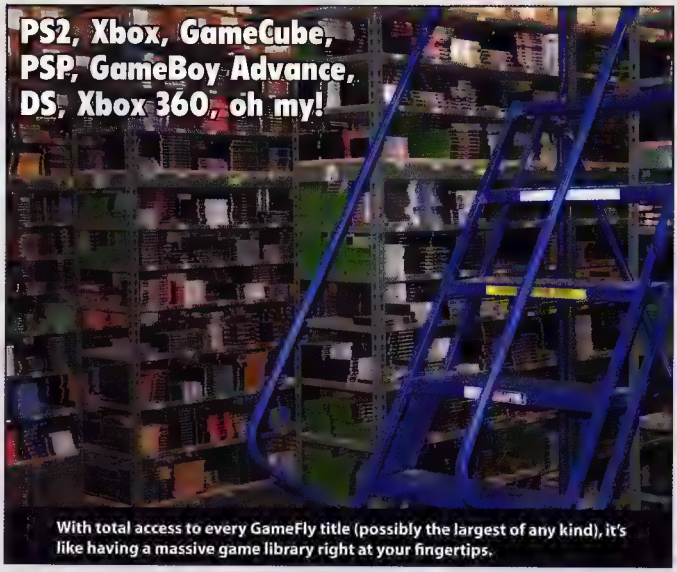
GameFly's FastReturn service means you'll be sent your next pick as soon as the post office scans your returned game.



SELECTION, SELECTION, SELECTION

GameFly's game library is one of the largest on the planet (over 3,000 titles), and includes virtually every title for the PlayStation 2, GameCube, Xbox, Game Boy Advance, Nintendo DS and Sony PSP. This includes rare and hard-to-find games that ordinary retailers don't have the guts or space to carry and as a member you have complete access to every game in GameFly's massive library.

More recently GameFly.com added virtually the entire PSP UMD movie library to their catalog, so now PSP owners can get both games and movies – all through GameFly.com.



With total access to every GameFly title (possibly the largest of any kind), it's like having a massive game library right at your fingertips.

LIKE IT? KEEP IT!

You've just got the latest release from GameFly.com. You play it night and day, and can't bring yourself to pull it out of your machine. No worries. Keep it. Just go up to the website, click 'Keep It' and the game is yours – at a price that is 10-50% less than other retailers. The box and manual is then sent directly to you, in the same condition as if you bought it in the store - and it's never been touched by anyone other than GameFly.com. If you decide to buy an older game that has been in the GameFly.com library it's refurbished and returned to you (along with the box and manual) in a 'new' condition. The box and manual arrive in a near-mint condition since they don't leave the GameFly.com warehouse until the game is purchased!

MORE GAMES FOR YOUR DOLLAR

For only $21.95 a month GameFly.com will send you two games that you can play as long as you like. If you play and return just these games in a week, you can play as many as 10 games a month. Do the math – at full price that would amount to over $400.00.

Speaking of math, how many times have you bought a game, got it home and after playing it for an hour or so felt ripped off? GameFly.com gives you the opportunity to 'Try Before You Buy.' Now you'll never feel 'ripped off' again.

For less than $0.75 a day you can play all the games you want!

GET A TASTE OF NO LOAD TIMES

UNLIMITED FREEDOM ULTIMATE CONTROL

freedom to ride **FOREVER**

customize your **LOOKS, DECK** and **TRICKS** - all in game

SOUNDTRACK FEATURING MY CHEMICAL ROMANCE, FALL OUT BOY AND TAKING BACK SUNDAY COVERING PUNK CLASSICS

TEEN

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Blood
Crude Humor
Language
Suggestive Themes
Violence

ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

PlayStation.2

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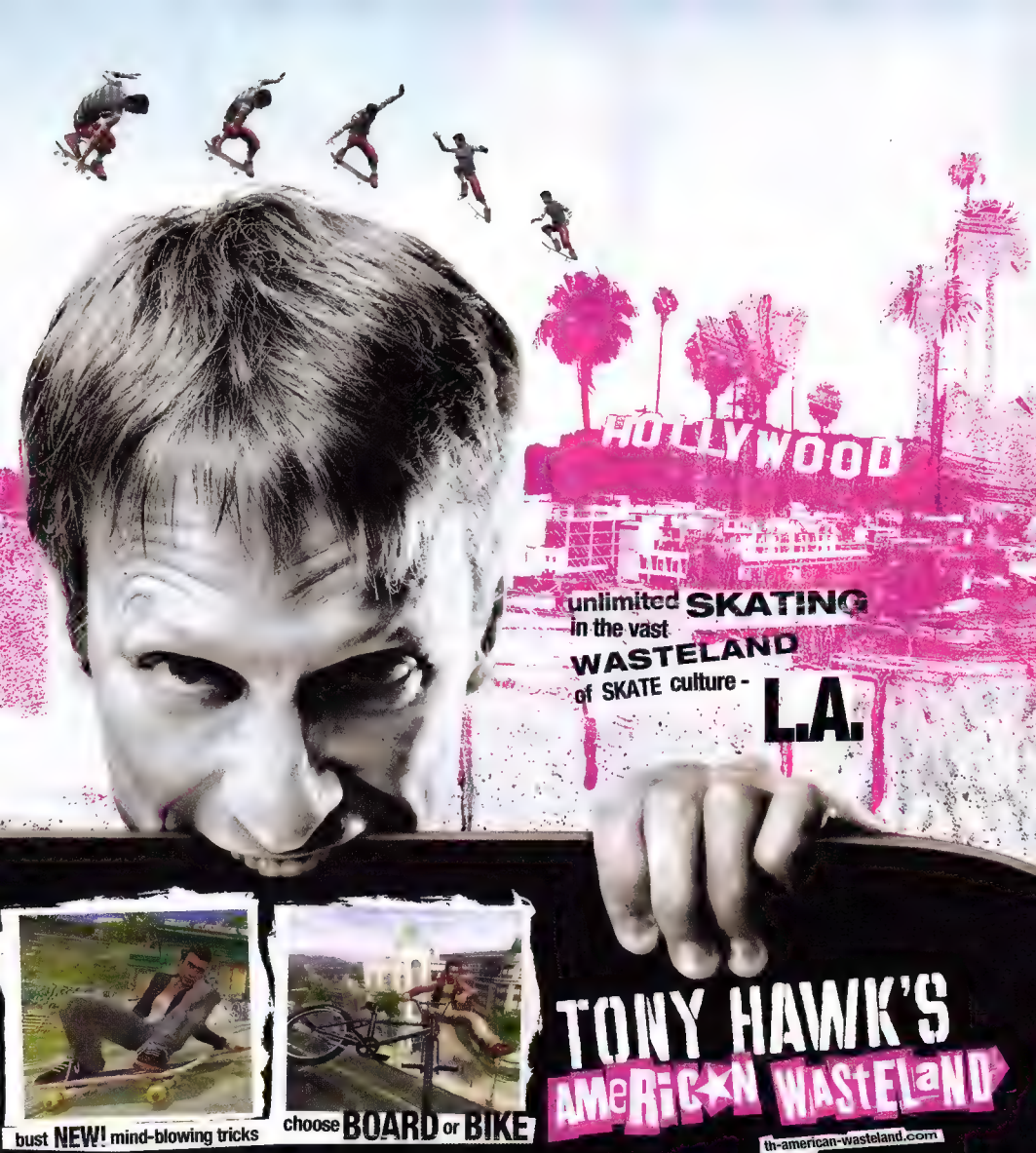

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activision.com

It's the pose that started a revolution.

THE FRESHMAKER

Tomb Raider: Legend

Everything old is new again

TOMB RAIDER: LEGEND

PUBLISHED BY
Eidos

MADE BY
Crystal Dynamics

WHAT IS THIS?
Puzzles, platforming and guns – oh my!

ESRB RATING
Not yet rated

IT COMES OUT
Spring

MULTIPLAYER
No

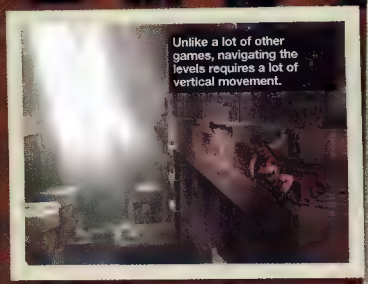
ONLINE
No

Whether or not you know it to be a popular videogame franchise, a movie starring Angelina Jolie, or just that its dual-pistol-wielding heroine is scantily clad and overly top heavy, you *know Tomb Raider.* If you're a gamer, you also know that the series has been on an unstoppable downward spiral since the first sequel (or second sequel, if you're an optimist). We can't deny that the first game forever changed gaming – it truly did. But in a twist of fatal irony, the series has remained so stagnant, the black cloud of flies hovering above it borders on opaque.

Thankfully, the powers that be have had the blinding veil lifted from their eyes and have taken the first true step to reviving the series: handing the development duties over to Crystal Dynamics. The almost-veteran developer's experience with games shines through immediately upon setting eyes on the game. Sporting an updated look that's at once refreshing and familiar, *Tomb Raider: Legend,* at the very least, looks the part it's been destined to play. Vast catacombs and lush jungles make their triumphant return, only this time adorned with up-to-date effects and features.

Then there's Lara. Sticking with the caricature art style that's become a staple for the series, the woman who brought girl power to the world of gaming has never looked better or truer to form. Taking a cue from perhaps *Prince of Persia* (which in turn owes its own debt to the *Tomb Raider* series), Lara now animates with a natural fluidity and controls just as well. Gone is that invisible grid you wished would just crumple up and die. In its place is… nothing. You can just run and flip and swing in any direction with ease.

In the two levels we were privy to, one was focused primarily on shooting. Taking place in a ghost town-inspired environment, the firefight featured numerous enemies onscreen with Lara auto-targeting each and taking them down with her, yes, dual pistols. An additional



Unlike a lot of other games, navigating the levels requires a lot of vertical movement.

Pushing crates is so passé. Rolling boulders, á la *Katamari*, is what's hot.

Lara's skin and clothes will actually look wet after she's been swimming. Eventually she'll dry up and look normal, like this.

Many of Lara's signature moves (like the swan dive) can be performed using a combination of buttons.

over-the-shoulder view allows for free aiming, the catch being you're stuck in place with cement feet. A grappling hook device can also be shot out and used to stun opponents before going in for the final kill.

But hey, *Tomb Raider* is more about exploration and crafty puzzles than action, and the developers know it. In one level we played, we couldn't help but feel a giddy sense of nostalgia as we performed precision jumps, death-defying rope swings, and completed a rather simple pressure plate puzzle. We'll admit, it wasn't entirely new, but some hands-on time revealed a few gameplay details that help to flesh out the experience.

First off, your little grappling hook is more than just a portable rope (though it's good at that, too). We used it to pull down a large boulder set atop a high rock cliff that was needed to finish the puzzle. If that sounds like it might be a bit obtuse while actually playing, it's not – any objects that you can interact with have a conspicuous sheen to them. Also, because 3D jumping has yet to be perfected, Lara can, if you're fast enough, grab onto a ledge as a last ditch effort to save herself. Just press a button at the right time, and voila, no cumbersome death to deal with. Convenience must actually be a high priority for the game, because you can even make Lara move up ladders and the like more quickly by repeatedly pushing a button.

Perhaps the most intriguing new feature we got to play was a timed sequence that pays homage to the glory days of *Dragon's Lair* (or for all you new school gamers, *Indigo Prophecy*). It all plays out like a scripted cutscene, only you're required to press the corresponding button/direction that's displayed at exactly the right time. Foul up and you're a goner. Succeed, and be witness to Lara really flexing her gymnastic abilities with a set of moves that would just be impossible to implement otherwise. It's all good fun really, and breaks up the gameplay while adding some cinematic flair to the game.

Lastly, we couldn't end this without talking about the swimming. When it comes to most games, water levels become the bane of our existence. In *Legend*, it's relaxing, beautiful, and faithful to the franchise. We didn't see any crocodiles this time ("No comment" was the phrase of the day, especially when it came to T-Rexes), but we'd be shocked if they didn't find their way into the game.

While the story is a mystery, we've been told its web is sure to ensnare some faces of yore. In fact, the overlying theme that seems to bleed out from every open corner of the game is nostalgia. Not the dreaded memories most recently burned into your minds by *The Angel of Darkness*. No, we're talking about those memories that you hold dear to your heart; the ones created the first time you played the game that changed an industry; the ones begot the first time you played *Tomb Raider*.

KAISER HWANG

"TOMB RAIDER IS MORE ABOUT EXPLORATION AND CRAFTY PUZZLES THAN ACTION"

If the PSP screen were this big, maybe I'd buy it. Maybe.

Why are Triple H and Flair fighting each other? It's a mystery... kinda like *Evolution*.

POCKET MANIA

PSP

WWE Smackdown! Vs. RAW 06

Defend the World Title wherever you go

WWE SMACKDOWN! VS. RAW 06

PUBLISHED BY
THQ

MADE BY
Yuke's

WHAT IS THIS?
The latest WWE wrestling game, only portable.

ESRB RATING
Pending

IT COMES OUT
December

MULTIPLAYER
4 player ad hoc

ONLINE
Nope

One of the PSP's more unique — and underutilized — features is its connectivity ability with the PS2. Yes, you can actually link the two up, but not too many games *(Stacked* is one of the few on the horizon that does) take advantage of this feature. Luckily for us wrestling fans, however, we'll be able to do just that with *WWE SmackDown! Vs. RAW 06*.

By doing so, any progress you make in the PS2 version will be carried over to the PSP version, and vice versa. So now you'll be able to play through a few matches in the main story mode, then transfer that progress over to the PSP and continue playing. Of course, anything you've unlocked in one version carries over to the other. Neat, huh? There are some other PSP-only features that the game will take advantage of, too — like ad hoc multiplayer for up to four players, which is perfect for tag team matches.

Naturally, some concessions had to be made for the PSP. The graphics, while still quite good for a PSP game, aren't nearly as good as the PS2 version. There's also no commentary while you're playing — though given its repetitive nature in the console version, this is probably a good thing. Lastly, since the PSP has fewer buttons than a standard controller, the control scheme had to be re-mapped a little bit. Thankfully, it's been done in a way that makes the game as easy to pick up and play as its PS2 sibling.

To help compensate for some of these deficiencies, some exclusive stuff has been included — namely, three different mini-games. The first one we saw was poker featuring the WWE Superstars. Fortunately, like real-life poker players, the Superstars have little tells so you won't be completely fleeced if you're not much of a poker player. If cards aren't your thing, there's also a multiple choice trivia challenge, where your knowledge of the WWE is put to the test.

By far the most interesting game, though, was a Eugene flying game. No, Eugene's not actually flying — he's just holding his arms out as if they're wings, and pretending to soar around the ring. Your objective is to get to the goal in the shortest amount of time, the challenge being to keep him balanced. A bevy of obstacles strewn about definitely won't be helping his cause, either. No one said being Eugene is easy.

JUSTIN CHENG

If you're a PSP-owning Captain Charisma fan, you might call yourself a PSPeep. Maybe... if you were really desperate...

Check out the detail in the *SmackDown!* set. Now can you dig that?

Get The Big Picture In The Palm Of Your Hand!

"Disney gets our highest marks not only for including a few extras (like deleted scenes on *Tron* or a conversation between Jet Li and Quentin Tarantino for *Hero*), but also for providing its movies in their original aspect ratio rather than cropped to fit the PSP's display."

– *Newsweek*, July 25, 2005

"Disney's innovative videogame-like menus featuring... flying daggers and swords on *Pirates*, and a movable magnifying glass on *National Treasure*, are entertainingly distinct from the DVD version of the same movies."

– *DVD Exclusive Magazine*, May 2005

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Buena Vista Home Entertainment

This is one of the few games on the PS2 that uses normal mapping, allowing for bikinis like you've never seen.

CLONE WARS

Hitman: Blood Money

All you need is a little patience

HITMAN: BLOOD MONEY

PUBLISHED BY
Eidos

MADE BY
Io Interactive

WHAT IS THIS?
Open-ended assassinating.

ESRB RATING
Pending

IT COMES OUT
Spring

MULTIPLAYER
No

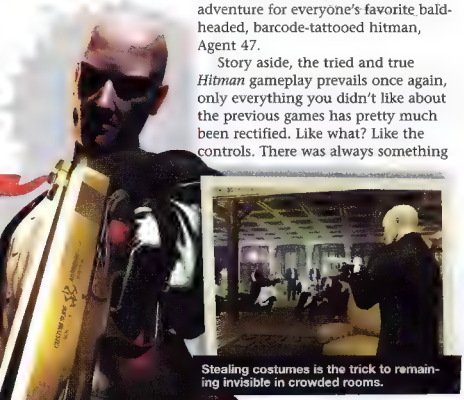
ONLINE
No

There's an unspoken and natural cycle to life, and when the hitmen become the prey, something's just not right in the world. It does make for a pretty catchy game premise (or a movie starring two impossibly attractive people), though. So begins *Hitman: Blood Money*, the fourth adventure for everyone's favorite bald-headed, barcode-tattooed hitman, Agent 47.

Story aside, the tried and true *Hitman* gameplay prevails once again, only everything you didn't like about the previous games has pretty much been rectified. Like what? Like the controls. There was always something a little stiff about Agent 47 and the way he traversed the world. Now, like any competent 3D game, you can frolic about the environments with ease, and manipulate the camera just as smoothly. Naturally, shooting benefits also.

Earlier *Hitman* titles also felt a little unbalanced, either from too much trial and error, or just sheer frustration from too much freedom. While the level of freedom has actually *increased* in *Blood Money*, enough new mechanics have been added to aide the experience. Found yourself being videotaped on a surveillance camera? Steal the tape. Too many people witnessed your hit? Bribe the press to keep your mug out of the paper. Just plain suck at games? Play the new rookie mode which loosens the harnesses a bit.

Further enhancing the assassin lifestyle is the implementation of a money system; buy weapon upgrades, pay bribes, hire some clean-up for civilians caught in the crossfire. While the system is not quite as extensive as in, say, *Mercenaries*, it's enough to make you stingy with your bills and cleaner with your hits.



Stealing costumes is the trick to remaining invisible in crowded rooms.

Read All About It

After each mission, you're given a full breakdown of how well you completed your task, complete with detailed statistics. You're then shown the front page of the local paper. If you were aces in your hit, you'll just see an obituary as the death(s) was seen as an accident. If you were sloppy like Joe, a perfect artist's sketch of your mug will grace the page. Also, if you zoom in and read all the text, you'll notice that the story was dynamically created to incorporate all your stats. Hella rad.

Being an extremely open-ended game, it's hard to detail a mission, as there's no right and wrong way to do anything. For now, we'll leave you with this: there are clones and drunk Santas. Stay tuned for more.

KAISER HWANG

cingular

raising the bar

Wireless Game Guide

The games you should be playing this holiday season

Get Your Game ON

Handy Hardware

gaming on a cellphone just moved up a gear

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DEDICATED GAMING BUTTONS • HORIZONTAL GAMEPLAY

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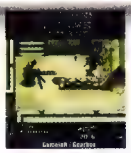
TO 386 (FUN)

TEXT SGG02
TO 386 (FUN)

TEXT SGG03
TO 386 (FUN)



TEXT SGG04
TO 386 (FUN)

Sony Ericsson

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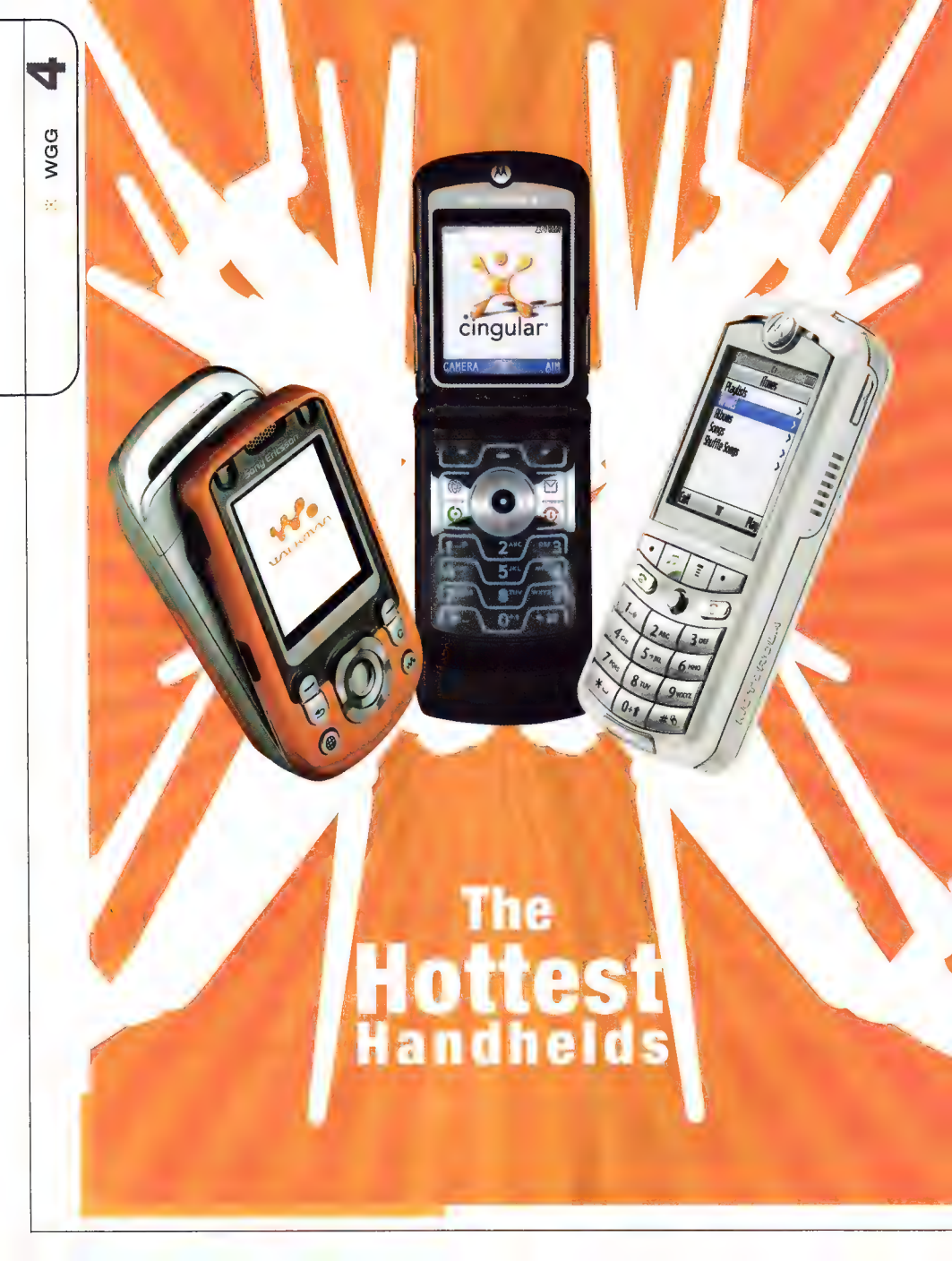

The Hottest Handhelds

The Hottest Handhelds

Sony Ericsson Z520

The Z520 is a small clamshell with a clean-cut design and distinctive loop antenna. Cool features let you multi-task with speakerphone, "see" who's calling with Picture Caller ID and play 3D games. And that's just a start. With this phone, Bluetooth® technology allows you to connect the Z520 with all Bluetooth®-enabled devices; download and play a multiplayer game with other Z520 users; share and exchange images and video clips between your phone and computer. You can also take pics in low-light with the night-mode setting. And with one of our favorite features: with the clamshell closed, you can use the external display as a viewfinder to take self-portraits and buddy shots.

The Hottest Handhelds

Samsung SGH-p777

This compact slider phone is great for games, music and multimedia, and can provide e-mail access and AIM and ICQ chat. With 100 MB of internal memory you can store up to an hour-and-a-half of music (via a USB cable) with room to spare for pictures and video. You can also unleash your inner-Spielberg with the camera on this phone: It is the first to take 352x288 resolution video clips with sound, which means you can play your clips back on TV.

Sony Ericsson W600

A "Swiss Army Knife" of cell phones, you can literally use the W600 open, closed, and angled. Our favorite thing about this fascinating little piece of hardware? The physical configurations allow this phone to actually look like device it is being used as. For example, if you are taking pictures and hold the phone sideways in front of you, it looks like a camera. If you flip it around to play games on the big and bright main screen, it looks like a mini gaming device. And if you can break away from all the fun stuff to make or take a phone call on this technical wonder, you won't look like you're holding a laptop to your head when you're on the call.

THE BEST GAMES...

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TRIPEAKS
SIMS2
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TWPGA06

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keyword: TURBO21

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keyword: FIFA06

keyword: TWPGA06

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PRODUCTS RANGE FROM RATING PENDING to EVERYONE
RP-E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

mobile cingular raising the bar

EA

The Hottest Handhelds

Motorola RAZR V3 Black

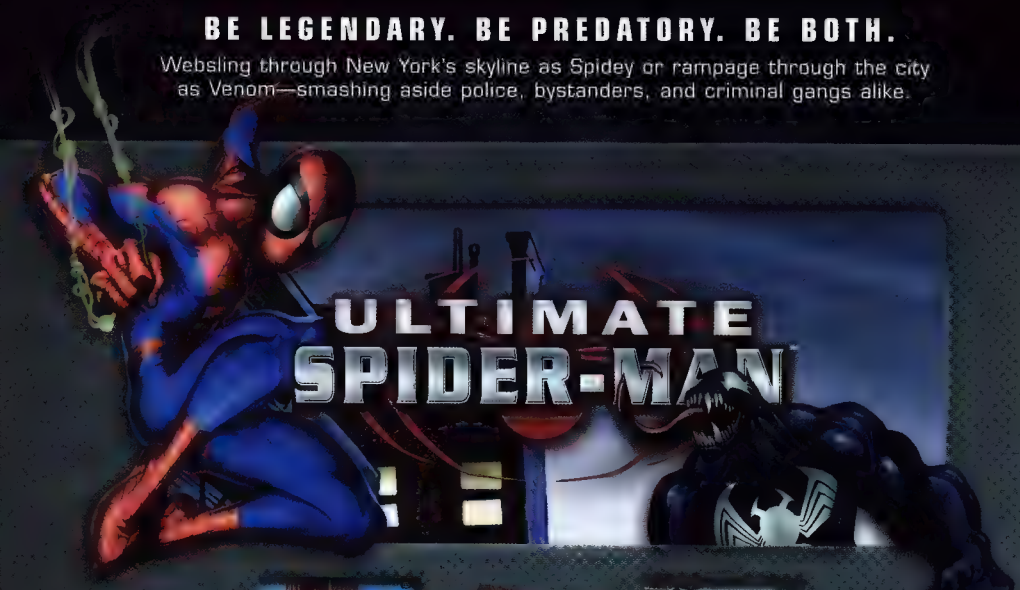
The RAZR single-handedly turned Motorola around, and for good reason. While there are many imitators, there's no other phone on the market that has this amount of sex appeal—especially in black. Incredibly thin, the phone flips open with a bright screen that's perfect for gaming on the go. Also packed into the device is a digital camera, e-mail and text support, quad band, voice activation, and Bluetooth® wireless support.

Motorola E1 ROKR

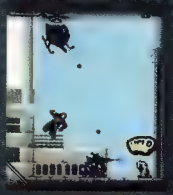
The world's first phone with iTunes, only from Cingular, is the fusion of mobile phones and music. The ROKR easily syncs with PCs and Macs using iTunes 5.0 to load up to 100 songs and allows you to take a slice of your music library anywhere you take your wireless phone. Needless to say, the polyphonic sound on this handset is outstanding. Other sweet features include an image composer, stereo speakers and rhythm lights, Bluetooth® technology, and of course, the ability to play the latest and greatest games.

BE LEGENDARY. BE PREDATORY. BE BOTH.

Websling through New York's skyline as Spidey or rampage through the city as Venom—smashing aside police, bystanders, and criminal gangs alike.



Huge range of authentic moves, including wall jump, web swing, and rebound attack.



Control Venom using super jumps, tentacle combos, and the infamous "feed" attack

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DIVING INTO THE GAMES

Multiplayer Games Multiplying

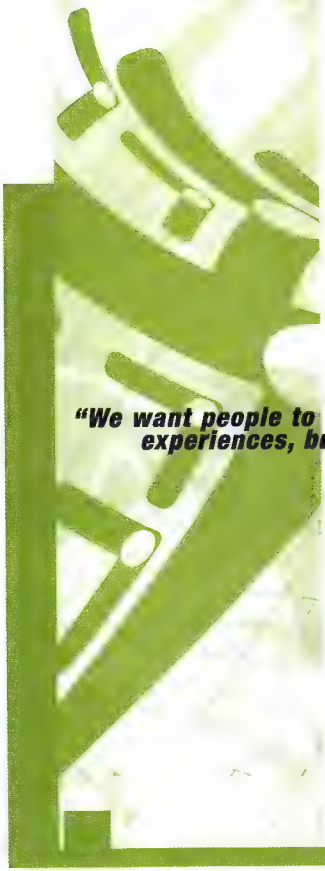
Just as the next generation console systems are focusing on taking advantage of always-on broadband connectivity to deliver friendly, compelling multiplayer experiences, the next generation of mobile phones is likewise looking to bring new multiplayer experiences to the airwaves.

Digital Chocolate, the wireless game publisher formed by the man who created Electronic Arts, is focusing on multiplayer games for cell phones. Trip Hawkins, CEO of Digital Chocolate, said that his competitors all think mobile is a content business, but in truth the mobile phone has great value as a social computer.

DIVING INTO THE GAMES

"Digital Chocolate has a very different strategy that uses entertainment content as the context for social contact," said Hawkins. "SMS is closer to our view of mobile-centric software, and today text messaging by itself generates 20 times more revenue than all the mobile games put together. Our Mobile League, that supports players of original mobile games like *Bubble Ducky*, *WordJong*, and *Johnny Crash*, is our first big step in this direction. Mobile League provides a social community that is always within reach from your mobile device."

Digital Chocolate is offering new social clubs like *Mobile League Sports Network Sports Picks*, which allows groups of people to gather and interact with cell phone games in an environment that blends fantasy sports, sports talk radio and "trash talk." Gamers will pay a $3 monthly subscription to form custom leagues and partake in the action across multiple sports.



"We want people to think of our games not as individual experiences, but instead like digital clubs to be shared."

TRIP HAWKINS

"These games are about connecting people and creating communities of players who are constantly engaged with friends and family within the context of their hobbies, advancing mobile gaming to a socially meaningful and modern form of entertainment," said Hawkins. "We want people to think of our games not as individual experiences, but instead like digital clubs to be shared."

The company said it will offer two avatar-based games later this year for launch in early 2006. *AvaFlirting* invites members of the community to create avatars that go on digital dates and report back on what they did and where they went. Members can revise strategies for their avatars from date to date and make new friends along the way. Digital Chocolate is also developing *AvaCars*, an avatar-based game in which members can build and customize digital cars. Members can race against each other, create car clubs, and communicate with each other using text and picture messaging, building communities around their love of cars.

Another area that's gaining steam is true mult-iplayer gaming. Companies like Gameloft have already launched games like *Asphalt: Urban GT* and *Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Jungle Storm* that provide true 3D gaming for up to four players. This brings a whole new dimension to competition, whether racing in licensed vehicles or hunting down terrorists.

"Xbox Live was the first 'live' gaming community for console gamers and it completely changed the way people played video games," said Michel Guillemot, CEO of Gameloft. "In that same fashion, Gameloft's real-time multiplayer also creates a live gaming community for mobile gamers. Though the technology behind both is drastically different, the idea is the same in the sense that both were the first for its platform."

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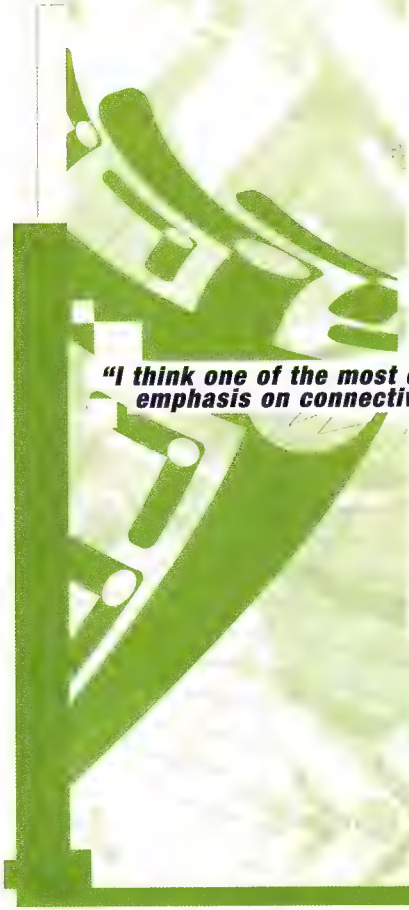
DIVING INTO THE GAMES

With Gameloft's multiplayer games, everything goes through the Gameloft server, so scores and names are all stored. There's also a "buddy list" option, which allows players to look for friends and other competitors. Other game publishers are expected to follow suit with multiplayer gaming over the coming years as gaming continues to gain steam.

"I think one of the most exciting trends will be an increased emphasis on connectivity: multiplayer, streaming content, community, etc.," said Andrew Stein, senior manager, games and applications for Cingular Wireless. "Mobile phones are the only portable gaming devices that are 100% connected all the time that they are in-network. Games are going to start taking advantage of this. Upcoming games will start to link the mobile experience with existing communities on the PC and there are some really fun things that will then be possible."

And as new technology opens more doors, these types of experiences will broaden across many game makers and developers.



"I think one of the most exciting trends will be an increased emphasis on connectivity: multiplayer, streaming content, community, etc.,"

ANDREW STEIN

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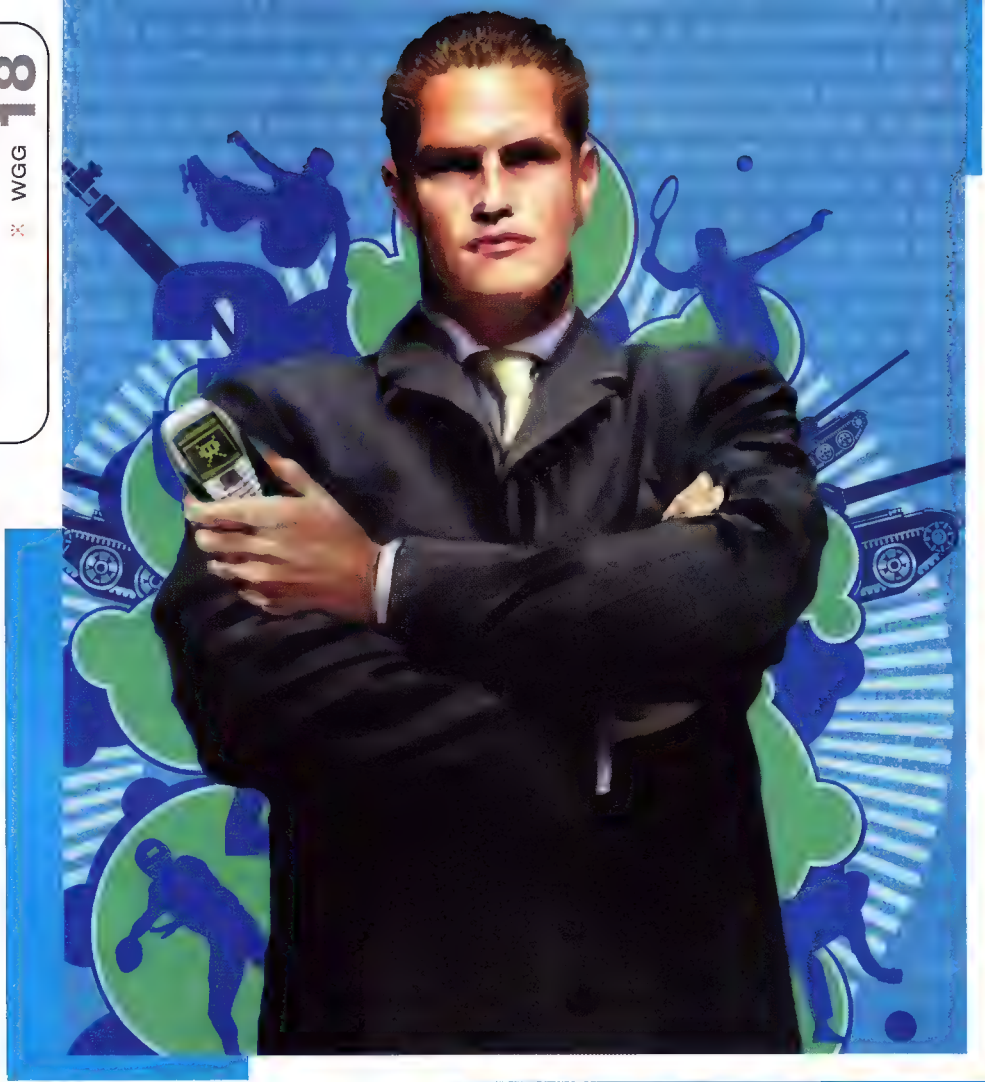


The Wireless Gamer

The Face of a New Generation

While Sony, Microsoft and Nintendo battle it out on current and next generation consoles, the wireless games business has quickly and quietly grown into big business. In the U.S. phones that play games have grown from a zero base two years ago to 50 million in use today.

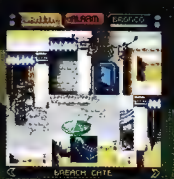
That number is expected to reach 200 million in the next few

HOOYAH!

SOCOM

U.S. NAVY SEALS

MOBILE RECON



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JAMDAT mobile

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SONY COMPUTER

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The Wireless Gamer

The Face of a New Generation

years, and there's dramatic growth in game-playing phones—50 percent over the past year alone. JAMDAT, which has a number of games including crossover hits like Tetris and JAMDAT Bowling available on Cingular, forecast sales in 2005 of $80 million compared to $36 million in 2004.

The niche has become so hot, even Hollywood is getting in on the act. "Hollywood studio and TV executives are recognizing that mobile entertainment is a key element in the overall promotional program of a film or TV show because it reaches not only the current fan base, but also extends the awareness to consumers who may not be familiar with the show," said Michel Guillemot, president, Gameloft, which has games based on *The War of the Worlds*, *Peter Jackson's King Kong* and "The O.C."

"Developing a game to coincide with the film or show is a smart move because unlike ringtones, wallpaper and logos, games allows you to relive the show or film. When you couple a hit film or hit TV show with a video game, it provides an automatic familiarity with the brand and game."

What is interesting about the growth spurt, is that the mushrooming legion of cell phone gamers don't necessarily mirror the demographics of traditional console gamers: There are a lot more females using their phones as entertainment devices. And the content has become more diverse, much more rapidly, than it did on console games, where the early generations of games consisted of mostly primitive shooting and driving titles targeting young males.

Console gaming also necessitated learning the nuances of strange input devices like joysticks and paddles, whereas with cell phones, most everyone who owns one is familiar with the button locations and inputs on their handset.

The audience for wireless gamers is much broader than the 18- to 34-year old male demographic that drives the console market. A recent survey of 8,500 teens and adults by The NPD Group, "Mobile Games: Who's Playing?" confirmed the theory that a lot more diverse group of people are playing mobile games. Casual games are the most popular category for wireless games, as card, board and puzzle games beat out traditional console titles for the top spot. Kids between the ages of 13 and 17 (60 percent) are nearly three times as likely as adults (23 percent) to be mobile gamers. Compared to typical wireless subscribers, mobile gamers are twice as likely to be African-American, Hispanic or Asian.

"Different people look for different things in games, and the beauty of mobile games is that we've got all kinds of games for all kinds of people," said Andrew Stein, senior manager, games and applications, Cingular Wireless. "Folks who love playing casual web games like *Bejeweled* or *Zuma* on the web can find mobile versions. Card sharks can play *World Poker Tour: Texas Hold'Em*."

Stein said Cingular sees very balanced sales in its sports, action/adventure, puzzle and card, and board game categories. Word, trivia and retro categories are starting to catch up fast, thanks to the releases of Konami *Frogger* and Namco *Pac-Man*.

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KEYWORD: RSL

KEYWORD: BOWL

KEYWORD: KONG

KEYWORD: COMBAT

KEYWORD: CARD

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The Wireless Gamer

WAY outside the game-geek stereotype

"This indicates that that we're getting different types of people, ranging from the more traditional gamer with the action/adventure and sports categories, as well as a broader customer who's probably a little older and more likely female with the puzzle and card & board games," said Stein.

Meanwhile, the study also showed that because of the fundamental limitations of wireless games today, gamers don't look at mobile games as a substitute for portable or console games. Instead, mobile games offer a way "to kill time or alleviate boredom," according to the survey. Americans want to play cell phone games in short 10 to 15 minute bursts while they're waiting in line.

And therein lies the allure of cell phone games: They're easy to get into, the phones and games are getting better all the time, and they can make those inevitable waits-in-line we all face in life a little bit more fun.

"Different people look for different things in games, and the beauty of mobile games is that we've got all kinds of games for all kinds of people,"

ANDREW STEIN

LOCK AND LOAD, DOOM RPG HAS ARRIVED.

"Superbly Playable"
"A Fresh Experience For Mobile"
"Hugely Recommended"
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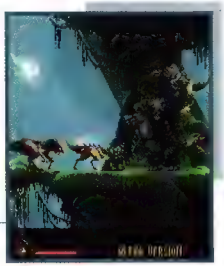
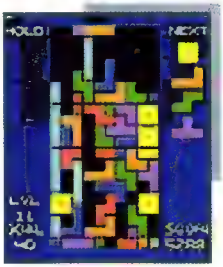


Hollywood

Peter Jackson's King Kong

Gameloft

The most anticipated movie of the fall is also one of the biggest mobile games of the season. Peter Jackson worked closely with Ubisoft to bring his vision to the videogame and Gameloft has followed suit with a mobile experience that allows gamers to play as both Jack Driscoll and King Kong. Whether climbing the Empire State Building as Kong or traversing through the jungle as Jack, the objective remains the same—to protect Ann Darrow. With vivid graphics and fluid animations, it should reign as a king of the mobile jungle.

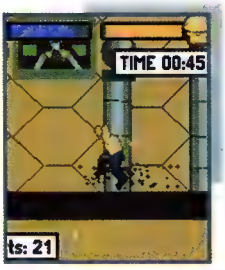


Puzzle

Tetris

JAMDAT

There's a reason why Tetris remains the most popular videogame of all time with over 60 million units sold worldwide. The iconic game helped Nintendo sell millions of Game Boys and was a major reason JAMDAT paid big bucks to scoop up 15-year mobile rights to the iconic puzzle game. No matter what kind of cell phone you own, Tetris, like JAMDAT Bowling, is a pure crossover hit. It's been parlayed into many forms over the years on nearly every portable and console system, but the core gameplay remains as challenging and addictive as ever.



Hollywood

Fantastic 4

Mforma

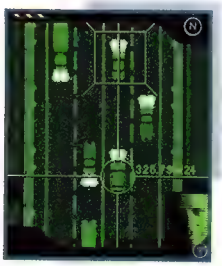
The surprise hit film has spawned a fun mobile game. Players can assume the roles of each member of the superhero quartet: Mr. Fantastic, the Invisible Woman, the Human Torch and the Thing. The game employs a cel-shading style and a unique camera zoom to bring the action to life on the small screen, and offers plenty of challenges through puzzles, platforming and flying action. Each superhero is armed with two special moves and a number of basic attacks.

Hollywood

Star Wars Battlefront Mobile

THQ Wireless

The popular multiplayer console and PC game goes mobile with over 40 levels from planets in all six Star Wars films. Players can choose one of four factions, including the CIS, Republic, Rebel Alliance and Galactic Empire and embark in all-out warfare both on foot and in cool Star Wars vehicles like AT-ATs. The action takes place in a real-time pervasive world with solid graphics and an intuitive third-person perspective. Multiplayer gaming allows you to track your high scores on the leaderboards, check out the interactive planetary maps for real-time battle stats and update your player profile. Although the movies are over, the adventure lives on.



Hollywood

24

I-play

These days, "24" is everywhere, including on Fox TV, on console videogames from 2K Games, and now on cell phones. Players assume the role of a CTU agent and interact with characters from the hit TV show in original missions. It's a race against time to stop a potentially devastating war between North Korea and the U.S. Utilizing a spy phone, players contact, assign and guide Jack Bauer and other agents through a series of mini-games and puzzles. The real-time aspect of the TV show translates well to the variety of short mission challenges.

Hollywood

3D The Fast and the Furious

I-play

Console game developer Juice Games (Juiced) has slid behind the wheel of I-play's third mobile game based on Universal Pictures' racing film franchise. The new game is the first to add 3D graphics to the driving excitement. The career mode challenges the player to a series of one-on-one street races against progressively tougher opponents, rewarding success with cash prizes that can be spent on nitrous, body kit and engine upgrades for their car. The Java version of the game features eight races, pitting you against four successive characters from the film.

Puzzle

ML Wordjong

Digital Chocolate

Ported over from PC, ML WordJong combines solitaire with word building for the ultimate word-puzzle game. Spell words using letter titles and clear the board to win, and use your jade and wild tiles wisely to score big points. If you like classic word puzzle games, this title is for you The game includes one of the largest dictionaries for any cell phone game with more than 50,000 words, includes mobile league play, and is topped off with Asian-influenced sound effects and graphics.

Console

SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs: Mobile Recon

JAMDAT

Set within the world of Sony's SOCOM 3: U.S. Navy SEALs game, this new Mobile Recon experience puts you in the boots of an advance team of two SEALs—mission leader Wraith and Bronco. As the name implies, your pair of SEALs is running a recon for the Morocco mission you'll play in the PS2 and PSP version of Sony's best-selling franchise. An insurgent is trying to overthrow the government and it's up to you to quell the plot. Wraith excels with a sniper and a knife, while Bronco enjoys blowing things up with grenades and C4. Both of these talents will come into play as you make your way through the various missions, which include hostage rescues, snatch operations and target practice (from the back of a moving truck). While you always control Wraith, barking orders to Bronco is necessary to take out armed guards and work your way through the different environments. This collaborative effort among Sony, JAMDAT and developer Ironmonkey Studios has brought the essence of the popular first-person shooter franchise to the mobile landscape with unique gameplay and a fun and rewarding experience.

Console

Brothers In Arms: Earned in Blood

Gameloft

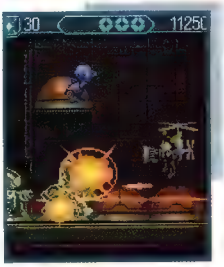
Gearbox Studio's best-selling WWII first-person shooter comes to the small screen with a new third-person overhead perspective. Chronicling the D-Day invasion of Normandy, the game puts players in the boots of paratroopers in the chaos of the largest offensive the world has ever seen. Controlling your soldier on the ground is a snap, which is a requisite in taking out the Nazi soldiers, tanks and other obstacles strewn throughout the battlefields of France. There's even the ability to jump into a tank and plow through the enemy forces. This arcade approach to the War to End All Wars works well on mobile, thanks to vibrant graphics and intuitive gameplay. With vivid graphics and fluid animations, it should reign as king of the mobile jungle for quite some time.

Console

The Sims 2

EA Mobile

Everyone loves The Sims. Now, PC players can download their favorite Sims to their phone and experience the fun on the go. For those who are newbies, this mobile version also has Sims to choose from. The game offers life aspirations and the ability to customize lots, trade objects, and socialize with other players in-game or send SMS or MMS messages to friends. The game allows mobile players to gather and socialize in the virtual Sims universe, which has always been a fun part of the franchise. As an added bonus, the game offers ringtones and wallpaper to complete your mobile Sims transformation.



Console

Ratchet & Clank

Sony Pictures Digital

While Ratchet & Clank are starring in their fourth console adventure this fall, they're making their first leap into mobile gaming. The game sends Ratchet & Clank, who have been miniaturized and trapped inside a cell phone, on a hunt for a way out. Taking a cue from the PlayStation 2 franchise, Ratchet is armed with weapons like the Boarzooka, Gravity Bombs and Mini Rockets. New weapons can be purchased in between levels. Always a fun console experience, this marks the first time that Sony's ported an exclusive PS2 franchise onto a cell phone. And judging from the playability of this title, it won't be the last time.

Console

Doom RPG Mobile

JAMDAT

Don't let the RPG fool you. This Doom is still all about the BFG and blowing away as many demons and monsters as possible. With 10 levels of 3D horror and an intricate storyline that utilizes the touchpad of your cell phone, this new Doom was designed for mobile mayhem. About eight hours in length and loaded with secret levels and new weapons—like the Cerebus for controlling those Hellhounds, the turn-based action moves at a brisk pace. The RPG element adds a new dimension to the game, as you interact with the many inhabitants of the UAC Mars base and a full-fledged story unfolds. An extensive tutorial teaches you the ins and outs of the new Doom gameplay, and leaves you alone just as all Hell breaks loose. While it may not pack the visceral scares of the Xbox Doom 3, open a wrong door and stare into the eyes of a cacodemon—and you still are in for a mobile shock. It's obvious that id Software worked closely with JAMDAT and developer Fountainhead Entertainment to bring this classic horror story to life on the small screen. If they can successfully translate Doom to mobile, any PC or console game is up for grabs.

RATCHET & CLANK

GOING MOBILE!

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Your favorite heroes are back - but they're trapped in your cell phone! Help Ratchet & Clank swing, shoot and grind as they fight their way out. With an arsenal at your disposal and waves of enemies to take down, **Going Mobile** has never been such a blast!

PlayStation.2

Play **Going Mobile** to get additional skins in **Ratchet: Deadlocked.**™ Now available on PlayStation®2

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Face off against a posse of bad boys, each with a special move to bust you up. Snoop Dogg Boxing is a classic, arcade-style boxing game where you fight your way up the ranks to face the king of the hip hop ring, Snoop Dogg himself.

THE LEGEND OF ZORRO

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The Legend of Zorro continues in a thrilling mobile action game packed with swashbuckling adventures. Challenge your strength and sharpen your skills as a sword-wielding hero.

SONY PICTURES DIGITAL

PlayStation.2

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Sports

EA SPORTS 2006 Tiger Woods PGA TOUR

EA Mobile

Tiger Woods is synonymous with golf, and golf videogames. EA has brought a collection of authentic courses and legendary and current PGA pros to this portable game. Strong play on the links will unlock a number of legendary golfers like Jack Nicklaus, as well as earn trophies for your collection. A challenge mode allows golf fans to work their way up through tournaments to take on Super Tiger, which even veteran gamers should find rewarding. Despite the small screen, EA Mobile has incorporated dynamic camera movements that show the action from multiple perspectives. The game also includes a running commentary, just like TV broadcasters provide every weekend.

Sports

Tecmo Bowl

Tecmo Mobile

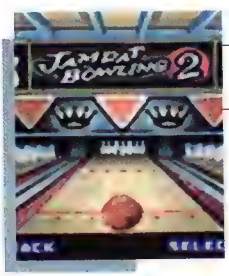
Classic games have been popular on cell phones since they don't require 3D graphics and are often easy to pick up and play with a cell phone keyboard layout. Tecmo brings its popular football franchise to the small screen. Like the NES version, there are no NFL team or player licenses, but that doesn't detract from the simple and addictive gameplay. With 16 teams complete with unique traits and playbooks, there's plenty of pigskin action packed into this little package.

Sports

Texas Hold'em by Phil Hellmuth

Summus

You watch poker on TV. You play with friends. You play online. And still, you can't get enough. One of the world's most intimidating poker players has saved a seat for you at his table. Texas Hold'em by Phil Hellmuth multiplayer poker game is based on the wildly popular card game. You can play it solo or against others on the wireless network. While no real money changes hands, if you do well the world will know. And now you can increase the stakes with real-time elimination tournaments. You can even go to the Texas Hold'em Ranking site to see the top winners by week and month.



Sports

JAMDAT Bowling

JAMDAT

Although most people consider it a leisure pastime, bowling is one of the easiest and most addictive games you'll play on your cell phone. It's on of the few sports that translates well to one-button controls, which makes it easy to get hooked on, but difficult to master (a traditional formula for any great game.) Whether you jump into a traditional 10-frame game or roll a three-game series, it's hard not to find yourself getting caught up in the action, and losing track of time. Aim, power and spin meters are all done with the touch of a button, and when you notch your high score, you can save it for future reference and bragging rights. Optional in-game commentary adds depth to this game for all ages.

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Pump Up my Phone

Cool accessories to customize your phone

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Now you can talk on the phone outside and look cool simultaneously. Motorola and Oakley have teamed up to deliver a stylish pair of metal-framed sunglasses and a detachable Bluetooth earpiece. The glasses work with the hot new RAZR phone, as well as other models. Hands-free driving has never looked this good. And there are even different color shades to choose from, for those who want to color coordinate their gear.

Motorola Universal NFL Branded Cell Phone Case

The NFL is in full gear, so why not support your favorite team on the go? For one price, this universal leather case (which supports most flip phones) comes with all 32 NFL team logos. Choose your home team and protect your phone on the road. A detachable, rotating belt clip ensures you don't lose that phone. And the low price scores a touchdown.

Bluetooth® Headsets Motorola HS820

No matter what make or model your phone is, the odds are there's a cool Bluetooth® headset available for it. Hands-free talking without the pesky wires is certainly a must-have these days. Prices range from $35 to $100 for these cool gadgets, which come in an assortment of colors and styles. Most Bluetooth® headsets work from as far as 30 feet away, which leaves plenty of room for maneuvering while on the phone.

Ringtones and Graphics

From the Blacked Eyed Peas to Elvis, and from Daisy Duke to Mickey Mouse, Cingular lets you personalize your phone with an almost limitless array of ringtones and graphics. We recommend compiling a library of your favorites so you can mix and match depending on your mood or the time of year.

Check it out at www.cingular.com/mediamall

n-gage.com

"Best Gaming Cell Phone" – Stuff Magazine

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Ashen
www.n-gage.com/ashen
Developer: Torus Games
Publisher: Nokia

Pathway to Glory
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Developer: Nokia
Publisher: Nokia

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Developer: Beenox.com
Publisher: Nokia

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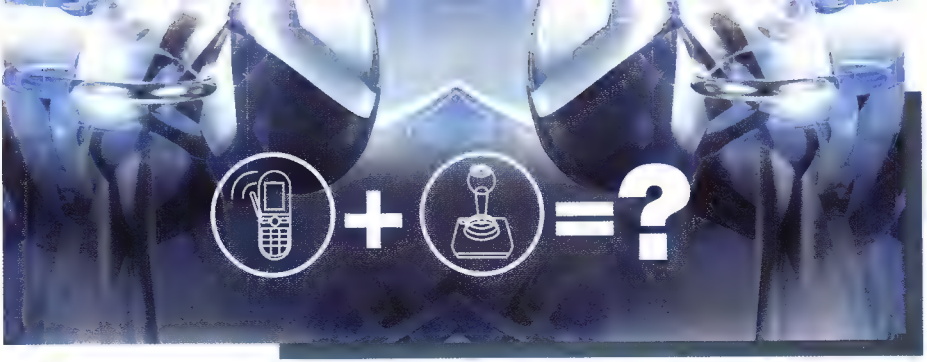


The Future of Mobile Gaming

Much like the PC market, new cell phones with advanced features, including the ability to play true 3D games, are always entering the market. With the advent of newer phones comes a better gaming experience. Andrew Stein believes the future looks bright for mobile games.

"As we roll out new handsets and faster network speeds, things like real-time multiplayer games and streaming content will migrate to mobile gaming," said Stein. "Imagine getting a cinematic cut-scene on your cell phone just like the ones you see in console games. This will happen in the near future, as video segments will be streamed over the air into the game in real-time. Streaming music will also come into play for robust soundtracks that will rival anything available on console."

"The transition from 2-D to 3-D mobile games is similar to the shift we'll see in the next few years as the game industry shifts from Xbox and PlayStation 2 to Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3," said EA Mobile vice president and general manager John Batter.

Batter said the transition will be a bit slower because mobile game publishers have to deal with such additional factors as infrastructure and the different capabilities of carriers but that it is happening and should be complete in the next couple of years for North America.

"By late 2006 and early 2007, we'll see 3-D cell phone games on par graphically with PSP games," said Batter, who added that this year's EA cell phone games featured software-rendered 3-D graphics, while next year's games will feature hardware-accelerated graphics.

"As handsets get more sophisticated, game makers will be able to better translate the movie experience for the mobile gamer in terms of graphics and gameplay," said Michel Guillemot, president of Gameloft, which has many Hollywood licenses. "The overall experience will be richer and more satisfying."

Trip Hawkins, CEO of Digital Chocolate, said that while the graphics will improve, the handsets will always be limited by small screens. With that in mind, the biggest growth in mobile gaming will likely be in the quality of games.

"The one problem that consumers face today is an over saturation of product," said Hawkins. "There are too many game developers offering too many games."

Wireless carriers that once carried 250 titles on their websites are already cutting the number of games to 150 to 200 titles and focusing more on quality games. Carriers want to offer a full range of choices, but they want games that are easy to use and are solid entertainment value. And that, more than improved visuals, will likely translate into more consumers of all ages exploring mobile gaming.

Batter believes that a larger segment of gamers likely will turn to mobile phones for gaming on the go, while a separate segment will carry both a cell phone and a gaming device such as a PlayStation Portable or Nintendo DS.

Joe Morris, Konami executive director of mobile content, says new 3D handsets will allow the company to bring games like *Metal Gear Solid, Silent Hill* and *Castlevania* to cell phone by early next year.

"We have a wave of new 3D games on the horizon to play on the new 3G phones that are shipping over the next year," said Morris. "This is a great space to be in right now."

New phones hitting the market will continue to add multifunctionality, including the ability to download music, music videos, and short video segments. True 3D multiplayer gaming is also an evolving technology for wireless gaming; and with more phones offering e-mail access, PDA functionality and the ability to store hundreds of MP3 songs and multiple 3D games, mobile games will continue to develop at a furious pace

"IT'S A SPANKING NEW VIEWTIFUL JOE ADVENTURE"

This game is all about insanely chaotic action, which is perfect for gamers with short attention spans.

HENSHIN-TO-GO-GO

Viewtiful Joe: Red Hot Rumble

Your PSP life is about to get viewtiful

VIEWTIFUL JOE: RED HOT RUMBLE	
PUBLISHED BY	Capcom
MADE BY	Clover Studios
WHAT IS THIS?	*Viewtiful Joe*'s exciting PSP debut.
ESRB RATING	Teen
IT COMES OUT	November
MULTIPLAYER	2-player co-op, 4-player versus
ONLINE	No

There's no shortage of love for the *Viewtiful Joe* franchise here at the PSM offices. Sure, the last game wasn't quite as good as the spectacular original, but that game is hard to beat — especially on PS2, where the game was simply saturated with badassery, thanks to the addition of one of our other favorite characters, *Devil May Cry's* Dante. So when Capcom announced that *Viewtiful Joe* was going to make an appearance on PSP... well, we were interested, to say the least.

Thankfully, *Viewtiful Joe: Red Hot Rumble* (fun fact: *Viewtiful Joe* was originally called *Red Hot Man*) is more than just a port of the console games; it's a brand-new experience that takes advantage of the PSP's strengths — namely, multiplayer gaming. There is some co-op play for those who prefer cooperation over competition, but the real meat of the game is the versus fighting (the game's title *does* have the word "Rumble" in it).

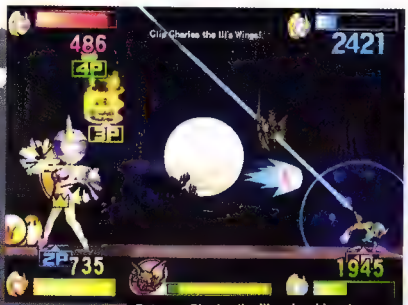
The premise goes like this: there's a new Captain Blue movie in the works, but there's no star yet. In order to determine who's right for the job, all the candidates have to audition by fighting each other. Whoever survives is declared the winner (in more ways than one, it seems).

From what we've seen so far, the fighting is less *Street Fighter* and more *Super Smash Bros.* — sort of like *Onimusha Blade Warriors*, but with all the signature crazy-cool VFX action you'd expect from a *Viewtiful Joe* game. Of course, there's more to it than just whaling on your opponents with punches and kicks — just like in the previous games, you can use your environment to your advantage. In fact, you can even use enemies as weapons to take down your real opponents, giving the relatively simple combat another layer of strategy.

So with all this focus on the multiplayer, the question remains: who's in the game? After all, it takes more than just Joe and Sylvia to make a good fighter. Luckily, there is a wealth of characters to choose from, including some from the *Viewtiful Joe* anime series, so there should be more than enough roster variety.

What else can we say? It's a spanking new *Viewtiful Joe* adventure, and it's on the PSP. Just putting the two together is a recipe for success, but these new features definitely sweeten the deal. Now your PSPs will be even more viewtiful than ever before.

JUSTIN CHENG



Bat-man Charles the III makes his return, as does giant pink Sylvia.

Did you know there was actually a real-life Viewtiful Joe pro wrestler in Japan? Knowing is half the battle.

There's only one real *Viewtiful Joe*. Accept no substitutes.

Meet Jude, the main character of this here game. Let's just say you don't want to speed past him.

"THERE'S ACTUALLY A BIT OF PLATFORMING TO PERFORM"

Not only is there platforming, but there's even some double-jumping, too. Nice!

Sure, swords are cool, but you're better off with a gun in any *Wild ARMs* game.

HEY JUDE

Wild ARMs 4

More wild and more armed than ever before

WILD ARMS 4

PUBLISHED BY
XSEED Games

MADE BY
Media Vision

WHAT IS THIS?
A faster-paced, more action-packed *Wild ARMs* game.

ESRB RATING
Pending

IT COMES OUT
January

MULTIPLAYER
Nope

ONLINE
None

Ah, *Wild ARMs*, the RPG series synonymous with PlayStation (well, besides that other, uh, *Final* something series…). It's also synonymous with action — well, more so than most turn-based RPGs — and *Wild ARMs 4* certainly emphasizes this fact. Quite simply, *Wild ARMs 4* is not only the fastest-paced game in the series, but there are tons of action game staples added to the mix, too.

Wild ARMs 4 tells the story of a young man named Jude who lives in the town of Ciel ("ciel" means "sky" in French — high school French *does* come in handy!). Jude's searching for a little excitement in his life when he suddenly sees some strange ships landing nearby. That can mean only one thing: it's adventuring time! Jude naturally goes off to investigate.

Now, being spotted by these likely well-armed newcomers would probably be a bad thing, so Jude has to sneak past them to explore the ships. It's very basic stealth action — hide behind crates and the like, then move past sentries when their backs are turned — but it's pretty refreshing in an RPG. Once Jude actually gets into the ships, there's actually a bit of *platforming* to perform, as Jude tries to explore the rest of the ship and rescue some of the prisoners. That includes a girl named Yulie and a rebellious soldier named Arnaud.

Before you forget this is an RPG, though, know that there are still a lot of random battles to be had. This latest iteration in the series introduces a brand new grid system — called the HEX system — where seven hexagons are placed in a circle on the ground. On your turn you can attack an adjacent enemy, or move from one hexagon to another. Adding a bit of strategy to the combat is the fact that some hexagons enhance certain special moves. The really great thing about the battles, though, is that they move at a fast pace — you don't have to wait too long for your next turn, and you can clearly see when you're turn is coming, so planning ahead is easy.

This being a *Wild ARMs* game and all, it's a given that there's an interesting story filled with all manners of mysteries to solve, and an arsenal full of guns. Longtime fans of the franchise will find a lot to love, but there should be enough here to reel in some new fans as well. Check back soon for a full review.

JUSTIN CHENG

There's more to this game than just random battles and an engaging storyline… like laser-filled corridors, for example.

Whoa, land octopi? You never know *what* you're going to encounter on your travels.

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TEEN T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Blood
Language
Violence
Suggestive Themes

PC CD-ROM SOFTWARE

PlayStation.2

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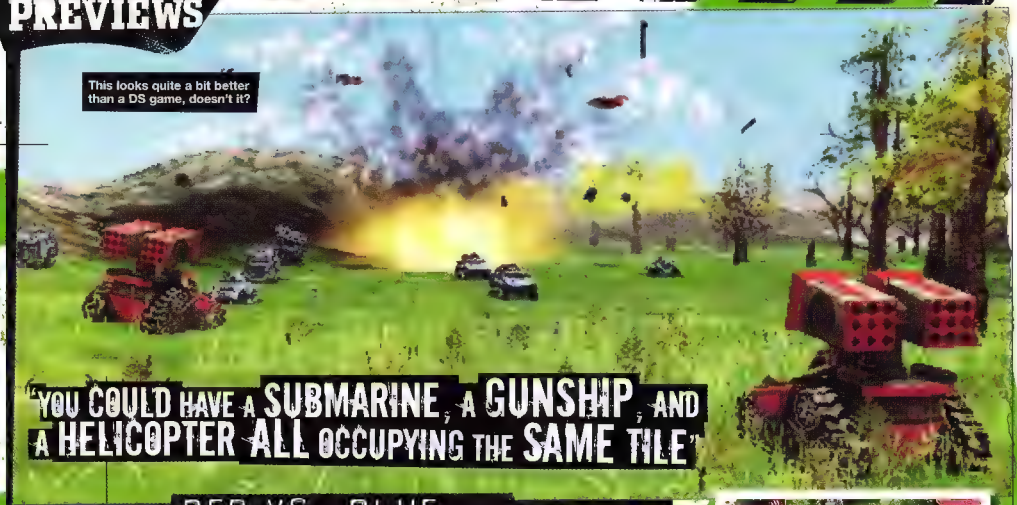

This looks quite a bit better than a DS game, doesn't it?
"YOU COULD HAVE A SUBMARINE, A GUNSHIP, AND A HELICOPTER ALL OCCUPYING THE SAME TILE"

RED VS. BLUE

Field Commander

A more... *advanced*... war for PSP

FIELD COMMANDER

PUBLISHED BY Sony Online

MADE BY Sony Online

WHAT IS THIS? Turn-based strategy warfare with super-deformed units.

ESRB RATING Pending

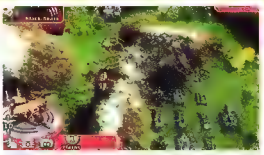
IT COMES OUT... February

MULTIPLAYER Two-player ad hoc, online, e-mail

ONLINE Yes

There's no denying it, *Field Commander* is clearly Sony Online's PSP answer to Nintendo's awesome *Advance Wars* series. The pieces are all here: turn-based strategy battles; super-deformed units (15 different types, encompassing land, sea, and air); a map in which six terrain types affect your defensive rating — it's identical.

Well, maybe not *identical*. The story lacks even one cocky preteen spouting annoying hip-speak over the course of its 30 missions. *Field Commander* also adds a few new ideas. For instance, battlefields have three levels, so you could have a submarine, a gunship, and a helicopter all occupying the same tile on the map. There are also destructible environments, massive super-attacks (like satellite laser strikes and napalm blasts), and 15 different unlockable "divisions," each specializing in healing, money making, etc.



The emphasis is on playability and strategy, so micro-management takes a back seat.

This game also remembers its publisher is Sony *Online* and offers customizable maps that can be up or downloaded, and several forms of multiplayer: ad hoc, online, 2P on one PSP, and even email battles. Fire!

ERIC BRATCHER

WHO LET THE DOGS OUT?

Bounty Hounds

Two hands + 500 weapons = new franchise

If there's one thing the PSP *isn't* known for, it's original games. Don't believe us? Just head over to your local game store and check out every "non-port" on the shelves; a remixed game with a tacked on multiplayer mode does *not* equal a unique title in our opinion. But we digress. Space, extraterrestrials, undiscovered planets... while the themes may not be original, Namco's *Bounty Hounds* is.

You are a Bounty Hound, a future mercenary of sorts sent out to rid the world of malicious aliens and conquer planets. Somewhere along the line, a corrupt corporation will make its appearance and you'll likely deal with them, too. Okay, enough exposition.

Action is the order of the day, and action is what you'll get as you fight endless amounts of ungodly creatures using a selection of hundreds of weapons, one in each hand. This is where things get fun, as you can mix and match melee and ranged weapons, and then switch between them on the fly. There's also afeature where you can play multiplayer with only one UMD.

We were only given a brief look at the game, but so far impressions are positive. And hey, any new franchise on the PSP is worth a look in our book. **KAISER HWANG**

Isn't it amazing that even a bazillion years in the future, people are *still* using flamethrowers?

You put your left foot in, you put your left foot out...

PUBLISHED BY Namco **MADE BY** Namco Hometek **WHAT IS THIS?** Outer space action-rifle **ESRB** Pending **IT COMES OUT** Spring **MULTIPLAYER** Two-player versus **ONLINE** No

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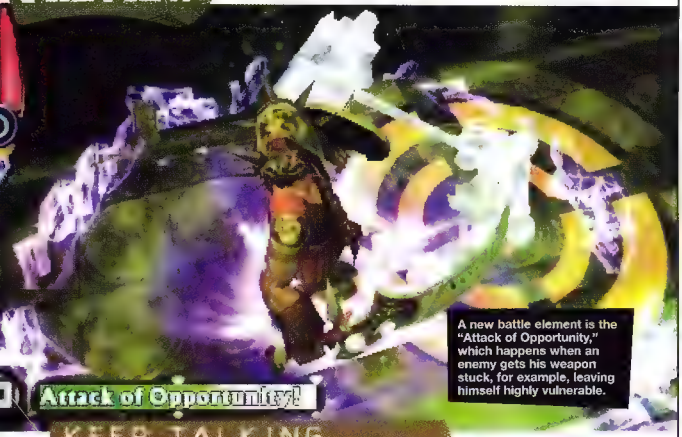

A new battle element is the "Attack of Opportunity," which happens when an enemy gets his weapon stuck, for example, leaving himself highly vulnerable.

Attack of Opportunity!

KEEP TALKING

Untold Legends: The Warrior's Code

PSP's sleeper launch franchise awakens

Despite being an entirely new IP, the original *Untold Legends* has sold over 300,000 copies to date — proving that there is justice in the game universe after all. Now, the sequel is girding up with a dazzling array of improvements.

One obvious difference is that the already top-notch art design has taken a turn for the more fantastic. Each of the five classes has a unique look: the tank-like Guardian has extremely wide shoulders and carries comically huge weaponry; the Scout is a tiny girl proficient with a crossbow; the spell-casting Disciple is severely rotund while the Mercenary is the resident sizzling-hot babe; the Prowler — a surefire favorite — is lithe, quick, and has Wolverine-style claws grafted onto his forearms.

The combat system has also been reworked, with each character having charge attacks, a ranged weapon, a beast form that gives them additional skills, and 12 attack spells — six of which will be mapped to hot keys at any given time.

The technical aspects have expectedly improved over time, with the lighting now being fully dynamic, the music fully streaming, and the loads being faster. Love it or hate it, the random level generator has been removed in favor of well-designed, deliberate dungeons. What's got us most enthused, though, is the online play for two-player co-op or four-player arena battles. This is definitely no quick, palette-swapped, clone-quel — this is a legend in the making. **ERIC BRATCHER**

There's a third, more distant camera view now, but you may choose to stay zoomed in on the Mercenary. Rowr.

UNTOLD LEGENDS: THE WARRIOR'S CODE

PUBLISHED BY Sony Online

MADE BY Sony Online

WHAT IS THIS? The PSP's first online action RPG

ESRB RATING Teen

IT COMES OUT February

MULTIPLAYER 4 players

ONLINE Yes!

Battle zombies in ultra fast-paced, twin-gun action on the streets of NYC. Unlock new characters, including Slipknot! Defeat your friends in up to 8-player Wi-Fi mode, and your character lives on in the game of whoever you beat, and whoever they beat. No one is safe!

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MATURE 17+

M

Blood and Gore
Strong Language
Intense Violence

ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

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MATURE 17+ M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Blood
Language
Violence

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PSM REVIEWS

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HOW WE RATE GAMES

We take our reviews *very* seriously. We spend hours upon hours playtesting each game so that we can give you the absolute best information to help you buy.

Games that score an 8, 9 or 10 earn a PSM Buy-Or-Die Award. We don't hand these beauties out easily, so if you see one on a review or anywhere else, you'll want to be sure to check that game out.

Finally, when looking up past scores, keep in mind that older games usually wouldn't fare as well if reviewed today since the bar is constantly being raised.

10 CLASSIC
A rare gem; our highest recommendation

9 OUTSTANDING
One of the better games you'll play all year

8 VERY GOOD
You can't go wrong

7 GOOD
A solid game

6 OKAY
Kind of fun, but no big deal

5 SO-SO
You've got to really love the subject matter

4 LACKING
Big flaws really hurt this game

3 BAD
Not fun at all

2 AWFUL
This game is an insult

1 WHY?
Why would anyone do this to us?

PRIMAL PRIMATE

PETER JACKSON'S KING KONG

Two creative minds join forces and craft the best movie-licensed game in history

PSM BUY OR DIE!

Is Michel Ancel the luckiest guy in the world? A critical darling whose industry status is further deified on each passing day, the almost reclusive Ancel has been hailed as everything from the French Miyamoto to the new Walt Disney — and that with only a handful of titles under his belt. The praise is not without good cause, though. His titles *(Beyond Good & Evil, Rayman)* carry a signature degree of overwhelming character and soul, so much that as a player, it's not surprising to be emotionally weighted down by the in-game tribulations.

Ironically, Ancel's titles rarely break the status quo in terms of gameplay; each and every title finds the players doing things they've done before in other games — though often not in exactly that same way. But as Ancel has proven more than once, derivative is by no means synonymous with deficient. Create a game with enough heart and people will notice.

Thousands of miles away from Ancel's home off the coast of France, someone *did* notice. His name is Peter Jackson. Roughly four years ago, Jackson sifted his way through the mass of holiday games and found a diamond in the rough: *Beyond Good & Evil*. Jackson played through the game, and felt the connection with the characters and the undeniably strong narrative. Right around this same time, Jackson was starting preproduction on his post *The Lord of the Rings* outing: a remake of the 1933 classic, *King Kong*. The effect of this planet-aligning catalyst was a personal call to Ancel requesting that he concurrently develop a *King Kong* game alongside the film. Ancel's answer? It's quite obvious, isn't it?

Sometimes watching the other characters is so engrossing, you forget to save them.

PETER JACKSON'S KING KONG

PUBLISHED BY
Ubisoft

MADE BY
Ubisoft Montpellier

HOW MUCH?
$49.99

ESRB RATING
Teen

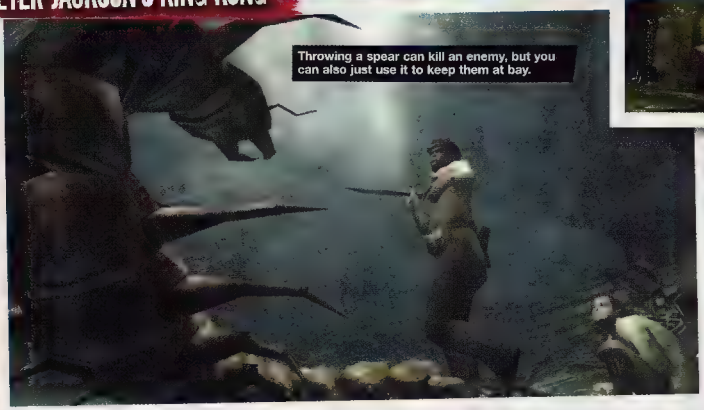
MULTIPLAYER
No

DIFFICULTY
Average

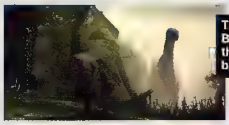
SUPPORT
+None

TRY THIS

+ You can actually interact with any and all members of your group by looking at them and pressing the action button. If they have a gun or spear, they'll give it to you. If they don't, you can still enjoy some fun mindless banter.



Throwing a spear can kill an enemy, but you can also just use it to keep them at bay.



The stampede of Brontosaurus in the game is simply breathtaking.

Unlike enemies in other games, the creatures on Skull Island will actually eat and sleep.

Parallel Lines

King Kong is at once purely simple and utterly unique, showcasing bifurcated gameplay and an instinctual theme of survival. During the large majority of the game, you'll assume the role of Jack Driscoll and play in a first-person perspective. This lion's share of the experience puts you square in the middle of Skull Island, a jungle-ridden land mass infested with giant insects, bloodthirsty natives, and a selection of ravaging dinosaurs. This setting, incidentally, is likely to contradict many people's misconception that the story of *King Kong* is entirely set in New York City. In truth, the Big Apple has only a small, though climactic, place in the story.

As Jack, your high-level goal is constantly to survive and to protect those around you — usually filmmaker Carl Denham — using an assortment of firearms and more importantly, spears (bones serve an identical function). The reason for the emphasis on using spears is twofold: one, they are in abundance on the island, much more so than bullets; two, they allow for manipulation of the game's animal food chain (see sidebar). Additionally, spears, when combined with fire, are a common tool for solving the game's fair amount of basic puzzles.

Despite a first-person perspective mixed with gunplay, this is by no means a first-person shooter. The complete lack of a HUD further stresses this game is an adventure, as you'll have to rely on real-time sound and visual cues for your ammo and health status. For instance, at any time you can trigger Jack to make an aural mental note of how many magazines he has in backup. Likewise, when Jack takes damage, the screen will pulse with a red color cast in sync with his own deafening heartbeat. This graceful system makes you immediately aware of your health level while simultaneously creating a sense of nervous urgency as you seek sanctuary.

The removal of the HUD also includes the absence of a targeting reticule. While anyone who's played a shooter may find this initially jarring, the generous auto-aim lets you focus on big movements as opposed to the needless minutiae of placing a target precisely over an enemy.

As Kong, you'll find a similar

Skull Island's Food Pyramid

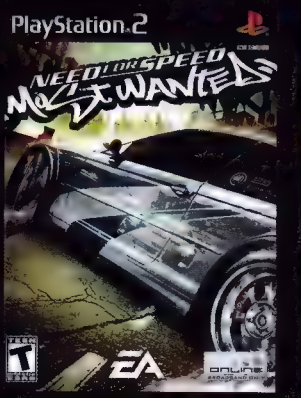
Skull Island is a melting pot for all shapes, sizes, and varieties of creatures. Unlike most other virtual animals, the wild things on the island are hungry — literally. While you're most likely their first choice of meal, it's a rare occasion that one will turn down a conveniently sacrificed critter that's been speared and thrown their way. After all, it's less work for them.

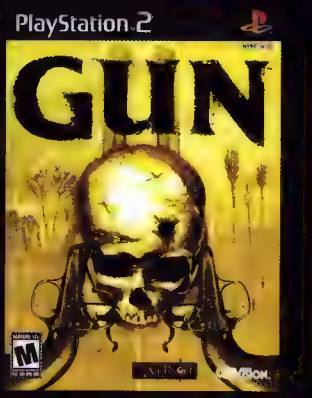
The primary use for this tactic is to divert the enemies attention so that you can pass by unbeknownst to them, though you can sometimes persuade two differing species to fight each other by coaxing them to move near each other. If you're feeling a bit sinister, you can also use their time of gorging to take a few cheap shots at their backs with either your gun or another spear. Better yet, why not burn down the bramble around them while they're eating?

The presence of this virtual food chain allows for some exhilarating, almost open-ended gameplay dynamics, but more so it creates a heightened sense of immersion and brings a level of realism to the in-game world.

Despite what you've been told all your life, it's okay to feed the large animals.

Don't Disappoint Yourself, Loved One or Significant Other.





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circuit city

macro approach to the gameplay — in third-person this time — in which you never have to worry about the details. Running on walls and swinging wildly from branch to branch are almost automatic actions, where your role boils down to pressing forward and pushing a button at an approximate time. Combat requires a bit more hands-on control, but again, the interface is clean and simple, and the game constantly rewards you with spectacular action sequences and flashy camera angles.

This back-to-basics take on the user interface, as mentioned before, frees you from the confines of micro-management and lets you soak in the experience without being bogged down by any superfluous elements. Another benefit is that almost anyone can play the game. Essentially, this is the antithesis of *Batman Begins*; this is a mass market game actually done right.

The Art of Monsters

Ancel's Montpellier team has always had a good handle on the PS2 hardware, as was demonstrated by *Beyond Good & Evil's* stunning Jade graphics engine. For *King Kong*, the team has pulled all the stops and crafted a visual look for the game that explodes in a thousand shades of green, and is littered with subtle hints of twiggy browns and morbid grays. On its own, the color scheme and jungle environment may seem a bit drab, but when juxtaposed against the magnificent lighting effects and truly dazzling island creatures, you can't deny the sense of a grounded virtual wilderness.

The dinosaurs are also worth mentioning, even more so than the fertile environments. To be frank, never before have you seen prehistoric creatures in a game like the ones in *King Kong*. They animate with such lifelike fluidity and roar with an unprecedented ferocity that the combined effect is something akin to your virgin experience with Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* some 12 ago. It's something you have to witness for yourself in the proper surroundings (read: dimmed room, large screen, volume to 11) to fully appreciate. In fact, the only thing more moving in the game is Kong himself, whose scarred visage can imply only one thing: Kong *is* king of the jungle.

Adding to the thrilling sensation of seeing these over-the-top creatures move with lives of their own is the sense of scale. Without the illusion that Kong, or any of the game's dinosaurs, are larger than life, the almost masculine sense of empowerment that comes from controlling such a beast would instantly disintegrate. With it, the game becomes a tall tale come to life. Conversely, when playing as Jack, the disproportion in size enhances the feeling of dread and anxiety, especially when being chased by one of the game's larger dinosaurs.

One For The Books

King Kong is without a doubt Ancel's surest outing as a game creator, filled to the brim with new ideas and subtle nuances that make the game unparalleled in the movie-game universe. Whereas other companies have a penchant for picking the most appropriate established genre for a license, coating it with some glossy production values, and calling it quits, Ancel and his team have done anything but. Rather, they've broken down the central themes of the *King Kong* story and from the ground up have constructed an experience that's as visceral as it is faithful to the core story. In fact, the game takes it one step further by utilizing many of the unused assets from the movie, so you actually get an expanded look of Skull Island '05.

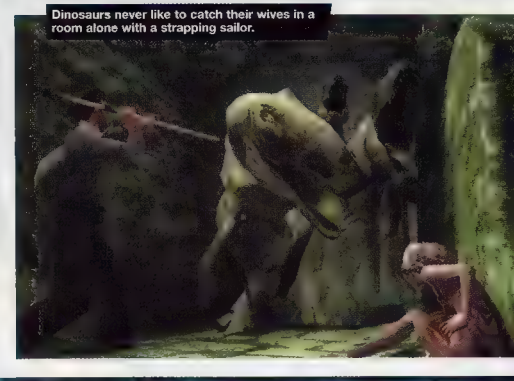
In the end, *King Kong* spits in the face of other licensed games. It stands proud on its podium as the best movie-based game since *Goldeneye* on the Nintendo 64, knowing that it not only does things differently, but that it does things *right*. It eschews flash and fluff for good old-fashioned suspense, breathless pacing and clever gameplay, all with a sincerity that is simply lacking in today's market.

While the overall impact and effect of the game is a resounding success, we still have a few niggling issues. First off, because the game's narrative is pushed forward at all times in-game with little to no cutscenes, you rarely privy to what's happening between Ann and Kong when you're

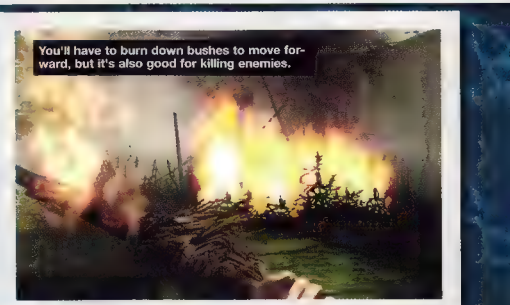
Secrets of Kong

King Kong may be more of an "experience" the first time through, but subsequent plays become profoundly more arcade-like as you're later graded and awarded points for speed, accuracy, and other such gamey statistics. These points serve a monetary purpose and can be exchanged for a number of locked features such as the ability to place a sepia tone over the visuals, or to play the game's levels in a kind of mirror mode where everything is horizontally flipped. These are all small beans though, compared to the final unlockable: a playable alternate ending. For what it's worth, we'll say that you haven't fully played the game until you've witnessed this alternate conclusion.

The NPC AI feels just like it should — where they're just a little more helpless than you.



Dinosaurs never like to catch their wives in a room alone with a strapping sailor.



You'll have to burn down bushes to move forward, but it's also good for killing enemies.

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CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood
Language
Sexual Themes
Violence

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THQ

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playing as Jack, and vice versa. Only when the story brings all three characters together at once do you get a more complete picture of their eccentric three-way relationship. Although, to be fair, having it any other way might have broken the game's seamless nature and caused more harm than good. So perhaps things are better this way.

Also, as great as the game is, you're left wanting more after its relatively short playtime. We completed the game and unlocked all its features in roughly ten hours. Far from obscene, but still not more than a dedicated day's worth of play. A few gamers might also find the gameplay a tad repetitive, though the sheer intensity of every level, and incidentally the abbreviated length of the game, will effectively nullify this point for many.

New Beginnings

The point at which Ancel and Jackson's lives have intersected is a peculiar one. Taking a look back on Jackson's career, you'll find a stable of original films that have all the artistic credibility and cult followings you'd expect from someone like Jackson, from the bizarrely fascinating *Meet the Feebles* to the psychedelic drama, *Heavenly Creatures*. But it wasn't until his film adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings* that Peter Jackson became a bankable household name.

Coincidentally, Ancel's career has, until this point, mirrored Jackson's to a degree. Again, you'll find an eerily similar back catalog of critically adored game that were perhaps a little too ahead of their time. Ancel now sits on the cusp of mainstream acceptance with *King Kong* — suitably an adaptation of a Peter Jackson film.

If the two lives of these remarkable creators continue down their symmetrical paths — and if *King Kong* is any indication, it's all but inevitable — then the answer to our original question is obvious: Michel Ancel *is* the luckiest guy in the world... and we're the ones reaping the benefits.

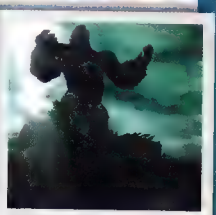
KAISER HWANG

PSM SCORE 9.0

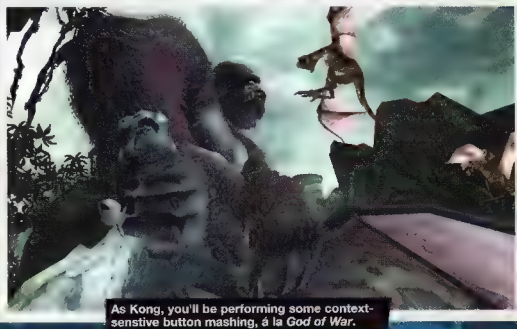
BEAUTY	BEAST
+Lush visuals; high level of immersion; creative gameplay; thundering sound.	+A bit short; could use a bit more story development; couple fetch quests.

HOW IT STACKS UP

Peter Jackson's King Kong	9
LotR: The Return of the King	8
From Russia with Love	7.5
The Matrix: Path of Neo	6.5
Star Wars Episode III	5.5



FYI: The Kong models used in the original 1933 movie were only 18 inches tall.



As Kong, you'll be performing some context-senstive button mashing, á la *God of War*.

Q&A

Peter Jackson

The master director speaks on Kong, Ancel, and his favorite games of all time

PSM: Do you see an absolute convergence of film and games in the future, or do you think each offers unique and irreplaceable value to the individual?

Peter Jackson: I think that as we enter into the next generation of consoles, the technology and graphical improvements will allow for different types of yet discovered game experiences. I'm not sure if we'll see an outright convergence between films and games, but I think we'll definitely see ways to merge and meld the two into an entertainment experience of its own — one that's uniquely part both.

Movies have been around for more than a century, so they have proven they have staying power. However, videogames are continuing to gain recognition and acceptance as more than just a "game" and as a formidable choice of entertainment that's only going to grow. In the end, they each tell stories, develop characters and take us places that either we're very familiar with or places we could never imagine, and that's exciting.

PSM: Did you have anyone else but Ancel in mind for *King Kong*?

PJ: There were other companies that were being considered but it wasn't just a matter of one over another; there really had to be a solid "fit" and fortunately, when I met Michel, we just clicked. A *King Kong* videogame was definitely part of my vision for what I wanted from a new *King Kong* experience for this century to absorb — videogames are today for millions what movies were when I was a child.

PSM: What are your thoughts on EA's *The Lord of the Rings* games?

PJ: I learned a lot from my first foray into the videogame industry from the development perspective and I'm glad gamers enjoyed the *Lord of the Rings* videogames.

PSM: Can you elaborate a little on your collaborative effort with Ubisoft?

PJ: I gave Michel Ancel and his team creative license to make a great *King Kong* videogame that held true to the vision of the film, but that would be an immersive game experience. There's only so much time and content that you can place into an actual feature-length film, so the new areas on Skull Island, [and] the exclusive creatures Ubisoft was able to put into the game all make it a more dynamic experience. Things don't unfold scene-for-scene like the movie and that's the adventure and surprise element the videogame brings.

A videogame is hands-on, you're right there with the characters and interacting with them and the world around you throughout the journey. This level of immersion is not yet possible in a movie and that's where the videogame is able to expand upon the story and the events, and create a unique individual experience for each player.

PSM: Has the videogame medium always been of interest to you? Any personal favorites?

PJ: I pretty much knew all along that I wanted to have a *King Kong* videogame to follow alongside the movie because I'm a video game fan myself and I knew the possibilities for a videogame based on this story could be compelling.

I guess I would have to say *Halo*, *Beyond Good & Evil* and, of course, *King Kong*!

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Q&A

Michel Ancel

On fame, fortune, and the creation of King Kong

The man that put Ubisoft on the map with *Rayman*.

PSM: To start, what is your official title?
Michel Ancel: I'm Creative Director at Ubisoft. I'm directing every creative decision regarding art, game design, and level design.

PSM: Is that only for your Montpellier studio, or a more general title for a larger role in Ubisoft?
MA: No, no, just for the Montpellier studio.

PSM: Regarding *King Kong*, what's your ultimate goal in creating this game?
MA: I would really like the player to have the feeling that the world is real. I would like to have them play and think, "Hey, I could take a piece of food and try it myself." I like the fact that we removed the interface. Removing anything like big inventories increases the connection with the real world. And I would like the player to feel that now they are better at something, even in real life. The idea is to experience the world, and if the immersion is good, have a feeling that they have been living a very realistic thing.

PSM: It's pretty much common knowledge that Peter Jackson handpicked you to make *King Kong*. When you first found out, what went through your mind?
MA: Yes, it was quite an honor. Actually, at first I didn't know why he picked me! But then after our first meeting, we quickly understood that he played *Beyond Good & Evil*, and he talked to me about the game. That was the main reason. Because he's so busy, he needed a team that was independent. One that didn't need input every day from someone. That way he could be focused on making the movie.

PSM: Knowing then that Peter Jackson had picked you to make the game, that kind of put you in a position to say to Ubisoft, "Pay me a million dollars to make this game."
MA: Hey, that's a good idea! [Laughter]

PSM: But really, has that sort of thought ever crossed your mind? Do you ever feel like you deserve more credit or even royalties for a game?
MA: No, I do not ever think about those things. I think of it as a very good opportunity to work with Peter Jackson. We have two creative teams working together for the game. You know, you can be known and can have a lot of money, but working with talented people, it's different. It's not always about money. I think it's very interesting for us. Working with someone like Peter Jackson, we are different than what we were before. It's the kind of thing everyone is looking for — evolution. And I think this game will make us different in some way.

PSM: If it were anyone else besides Peter Jackson making the movie and you were asked to make the game, would you have done it?
MA: I think it was fate between Peter Jackson and the Montpellier studio. We knew *King Kong* was not a remake set in 2005 with hip-hop music and things like that. I like hip-hop music, but it's not appropriate. I feared that a movie like that would have been too commercial. I like the fact that the movie takes place in 1933, and the island, the world — these things are very close to the things we like to create. So I think when we work with someone and we have common tastes, it's better than being famous.

PSM: Was the game's more realistic depiction of the world a direction you've always wanted to go in, or would you say that form follows function?
MA: Yes, in fact, I thought it would have a third-person view at first, even for Jack. But I simply thought later a first-person view would be better, like when you're facing the T-Rex eye-to-eye... I'm really just into videogames in general. Even in *Beyond Good & Evil* you've got lots of variety, like hovercraft sequences, fighting sequences, etc. I'm not into a certain genre of games. I think different points of view [first and third] offer different levels of immersion. A first-person view lets you face the creatures and environments eye-to-eye. We chose the first-person view for Jack because it was logical for the game and the environments of the movie.

PSM: Did you find working with the movie license restricting on a creative level?
MA: You know, freedom is not always good for creativity. If you are faced with constraints, there's a chance you'll create something even more creative than if you had complete freedom. For example, if you have only a white piece of paper, you might create nothing. If you have a single shape drawn on it, then maybe you will create something out of that. I think Peter Jackson gave us a white piece of paper plus the good elements to let us make the game; like a hint of creativity. And that was enough for us to make the game. Sometimes freedom is not the best thing for creativity, and constraints can force you to go in a direction you might not have gone without some inspiration.

PSM: Electronic Arts is one of the powerhouses when it comes to movie-licensed games. What do you think of their licensed games, and also rumors that the company might buy Ubisoft?
MA: I think that when I'm making a game, I really try to concentrate on doing the best possible job. I think that every company must have this goal. I think that EA made some good choices. It's interesting for the player, the audience, to have different companies working on these licenses because it gives them different types of games and visions. My only hope is that Ubisoft will keep its own level of creativity. It's important that all the games not look the same, and they must not be built in the same commercial shape. I think Ubisoft has its own take on games and I hope that it will maintain that way.

PSM: You mentioned earlier that *King Kong* is a very mass market game. Did you feel obligated to simplify the game in order to appeal to the more casual gamer?
MA: Yes. But it's an interesting constraint. We have strived to make the game flexible. If you die too much, you are given different hit ratios and the difficulty adjusts. If you never die, you will have a certain amount of creatures to fight and a different special profile with unique statistics is created. The big idea is that hardcore gamers will be able to say, "I beat the game in this amount of time. I killed every creature in this time. This is my profile." There will be special codes you're given in the game to enter online. And we will have a very, very big list of the best people in the world, and they can compare their statistics.

WHAT'S YOUR POINT?
stealth
mind control
muscle
SLY 3
HONOR AMONG THIEVES
ICE CREAM
ICE CREAM
ICE CREAM
EVERYONE 10+
Cartoon violence
Comic mischief
ESRB

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Strong Language
Strong Sexual Content
Use of Drugs
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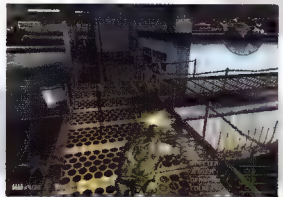
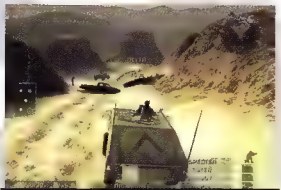
"FRAME-RATES STAYED SMOOTH EVEN WITH PLAYERS SCREAMING AROUND THE MAP ON HUMVEES AND TANKS"

Smooth multiplayer with 32 people online is just short of miraculous.



Smooth physics for vehicles means you'll roll right over boulders — and maybe the occasional opposing soldier.



The vehicles handle arguably as well as anything in *Halo 2*. Finally!

SOCOM 3: U.S. NAVY SEALS

PUBLISHED BY
Sony

MADE BY
Zipper Int.

HOW MUCH?
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ESRB RATING
Mature

MULTIPLAYER
32 player online/ LAN; broadband only

DIFFICULTY
Head Shot

SUPPORTS
+Pro Logic II
+Widescreen
+Online Play
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+Progressive Scan

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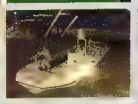

You can swim underwater, now. In multiplayer, this means you get several seconds of free-roaming invisibility. In single player, it means more stealth: you can swim up behind unsuspecting rebels and cap them with, say, a blunt-force to the head. Just watch out for boats.

MASSIVE MULTIPLAYER

PSM BUY OR DIE!

SOCOM 3: U.S. Navy SEALs

Huge maps and HumVees!

Forget any doubts you had about *SOCOM 3: U.S. Navy SEALs*. Two years in development, Sony has delivered a worthy war-time shooter. In the more open-ended (and open-air) single player campaign, you can now board small vehicles like a Bradley or a CRRC raft and zip around the map, or pile all your troops into an amphibious assault vehicle or a sluggish, but armor-laden transport. Maps are much bigger than *SOCOM II*, but they're easy to navigate due to smart level design and a handy waypoint system. Vehicle control is almost perfect, although dull-witted teammates sometimes stand around too long before mounting up.

Infantry controls are largely untouched. The third-person perspective gives you an expansive view of desert battlefields and tight-quarter Polish cities. The new "encumbrance" feature means you have to decide between heavy weapons and grenades that slow you down or just one primary weapon that makes you more nimble.

Graphically, *SOCOM 3* is showing its age with some low-res particle effects and washed-out polygons, but sound effects are a notch better than the last game.

32-player online matchers are fantastic. Frame-rates stayed smooth over a fast broadband connection, even with players screaming around the map on Humvees and tanks. *SOCOM 3* lacks the detail of *Battlefield 2: Modern Combat*, but plays better online. For example, long-range sniping actually works. Most maps have strategic choke points, so you get into quick firefights, *a la Counter-Strike* on PC. Adding something like medics and engineers to online matches would help, though. The only major complaint: weak enemy AI in single-player mode means guys will stand there and wait for you to shoot them, rather than finding cover.

JOHN BRANDON

PSM SCORE 9.0

SNIPER
+Command is as easy as point and press, 32-player online matches.

CAMPER
– AI may walk right into enemy fire, or fail to board a ride quickly enough.

HOW IT STACKS UP

SOCOM 3: U.S. Navy SEALs	9.0
Star Wars Battlefront II	9.0
Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	8.5
Rainbow Six: Lockdown	7.5
Delta Force: Black Hawk Down	5.5

LET'S ROLL!

Drive-by Shootings

Neither rain, nor snow, nor armed brigands could derail Chris, Randy, and Justin's weekly trip to the comic store.

Vehicles add a new element of strategy to the larger-than-ever maps. In fact, even long-time *SOCOM* vets will need to stay frosty, because even the most obnoxious newbie can ride around on a jeep and roll right over you. It means staying well clear of common routes, and moving around even more than you normally do.

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It's strange that you almost never get to play as Cleon, the most powerful Warrior of all.

"STEPS BOLDLY FORWARD, BUT REMEMBERS WHAT WAS COOL ABOUT THE OLD SCHOOL"

There are tons of microgames, which take place whenever you want to tag something, free a friend from handcuffs, avoid arrest, mug someone, pick a lock, etc.

PSM BUY OR DIE!

BEAT DOWN STREET

The Warriors

Rumble in the Bronx... and Brooklyn... and...

THE WARRIORS

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Rockstar

MADE BY
Rockstar Toronto

HOW MUCH?
$49.99

ESRB RATING
Mature

MULTIPLAYER
Two-player splitscreen co-op

DIFFICULTY
Average

SUPPORT
+Pro Logic II
+Widescreen
+Splitscreen offline multiplay

Based upon a 1979 movie (which was, in turn, based upon a book), this new-school brawler chronicles the violent lives of a street gang in a run down, *Escape From New York*-esque, near-future New York.

The movie tells the tale of a fateful night when the Warriors get framed for a murder and have to brawl (or "bop", to use the gang's lingo), sneak, and sprint their way through both the cops and every other gang in the city to get back home to Coney Island. The game follows this plot almost exactly, but also adds in a massive backstory; you don't get to the movie's opening scene until about 70% of the way through the game.

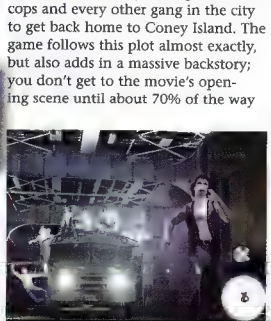
The fighting engine has a fair selection of strikes, grapples, and "I-found-this-item-on-the-ground-let's-see-if-I-can-bludgeon-you-with-it" weaponry, and the combat — actually, the whole game — is made much cooler by the "gang" element. You're always accompanied by one to eight wingmen, and you can use "War Chief" commands to order them to attack your enemies, cover your back, trash a store, and so on. It feels undeniably cool, and your posse can really handle themselves in a fight.

The Warriors also packs impressive mission variety. There are obviously some great fights, but you'll also find yourself slinking about in the shadows, stealthily-disabling enemies, *Manhunt* style; running through obstacle courses, painting tags (using a "trace the shape with the stick" mechanic), feeding the homeless, and more.

The camera is sometimes a pain, and a clunktastic aiming system makes throwing things at enemies tough. Oh, and while we're at it, the graphics are only okay and a couple levels would be much less frustrating if you could view more of the map at once. However, these shortcomings can't bring down a solid story packed with the trademark Rockstar style and attitude, and gameplay that steps boldly forward, but remembers what was cool about the old school. **ERIC BRATCHER**

TRY THIS

+ The quickest way to die in *The Warriors* is to charge into the middle of the fray. Try to have a wall or corner behind you, and use grabs and throws to keep yourself from being surrounded. Oh, and slam enemies into walls or use weapons against them whenever possible — it's very damaging.



It's not always the wisest choice to fight. Sometimes, it's all about running away. Live to fight another day, and all that.

PSM SCORE 8.0

WARRIORS
+Great style and atmosphere, good mission variety, AI wingmen.

ROGUES
+Arming system is terrible, map could be more helpful, graphics look dated.

HOW IT STACKS UP

Mortal Kombat: Shaolin Monks	8
The Warriors	8
Urban Reign	6
Beat Down: Fists of Vengeance	6
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 3: MN	5

2D IS TRUE-D

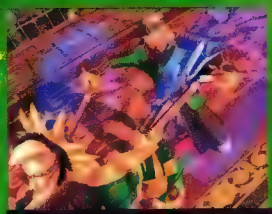
Flashback 1979 (kinda)

The *Warriors* has long legs even after you've completed its main story. You can try to complete every high score or bonus goal, you can enjoy the free-for-brawl Rumble Mode, and once you've beaten the game, you can play *Armies of the Night*. It's basically a *Final Fight*-style side-scroller starring Ajax, Swan, and most all of their moves. It rocks!

"MOVE OVER SOUL CALIBUR II — THERE'S A NEW KING IN TOWN"

Zasalamel is the easiest of the new characters to use. He's strong, like Astaroth, but much quicker.

Katie's "Sparkly Tambourines of DOOM" special move always inspired fear and dread in her opponents.



We've done an couple pages on character creation already, so suffice to say the create-a-fighter options plenty fun, if not the absolute most advanced we've seen.

PSM BUY OR DIE!

SOULCALIBUR III

PUBLISHED BY
Namco

MADE BY
Namco

HOW MUCH?
$49.99

ESRB RATING
Teen

MULTIPLAYER
2 player versus, 8 player pass-the-controller

DIFFICULTY
Average

SUPPORTS
+ Pro Logic II
+ Widescreen
+ Progressive Scan

TRY THIS

+ When playing the strategy game, *Chronicles of the Sword*, it's often better to actually battle in matches than just let the characters fight it out by themselves — you may have enough skill and/or luck to beat a higher-level opponent that you might not have been able to defeat otherwise.

THE SOUL STILL BURNS

SOULCALIBUR III

PS2's best fighting game has arrived

When we first heard there was going to be a new *Soul Calibur*, we had to ask, "How do you improve this series?" After all, *Soul Calibur II* is pretty close to fighting game perfection. Then we played this and said, "Oh. That's how." Move over *Soul Calibur II* — there's a new king in town.

Not only does *SOULCALIBUR III* — and by the way, this wonky new spelling we're using comes straight from Namco, so yell at them, not us — take pretty much everything you liked about its predecessor and improve it, but it's also packed with loads of features. These include a *Risk*-like, real-time strategy game, where the battles can be fought like regular *SOULCALIBUR* matches; a world tournament simulation; several mission challenges, such as fighting an enormous moving statue; and a great create-a-character mode. Plus, there are three brand new major characters, and actually a few more bonus characters, including the new end boss — but you can't play with most of them in the main single-player game. To top this all off, the graphics — especially the backgrounds — are absolutely, incredibly gorgeous.

There are a few complaints, of course, but they're mostly pretty minor. The strategy game could use a bit more depth, and as cool as the create-a-character mode is, we've seen it done more robustly in other games (like THQ's *Smackdown!* titles). Your created characters don't look remotely as detailed as the standard fighters and even if they did, you couldn't take them online 'cause there's no online play, which is disappointing.

But this is just being nitpicky, and none of this should hinder your overall enjoyment of the game. *SOULCALIBUR III* is simply the best fighting game on PS2, even topping our beloved *Virtua Fighter 4 Evolution*. Buy it. **JUSTIN CHENG**

PSM SCORE 10

SOUL CALIBUR
+It's better-looking, with fantastic new features and loads of unlockables.

SOUL EDGE
+No online play; created characters lack the graphical detail of the other fighters.

HOW IT STACKS UP

SOULCALIBUR III	10
Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution	10
Soul Calibur II	9
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai Tenkaichi	8
Inuyasha: Feudal Combat	5.5

O RLY?

Another New Challenger

The three new characters — Setsuka, Tira (rowr!), and Zasalamel — are cool and all, but our personal favorite new character has to be Olcadan. Sure, he plays just like Charade, Edge Master, or Inferno, but, well, look at him — he's got an owl's head!

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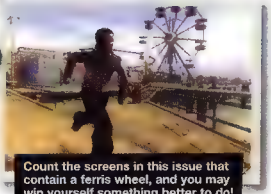
"...WITHOUT QUESTION, NEVERSOFT'S MOST MASSIVE UNDERTAKING"

We crab about the *Hawk* series cranking itself out with only small improvements, but this year the lighting, animations, gameplay, and levels have all gotten better. We're okay with that.

The plot isn't as crass and lowbrow as last year's, thankfully, but nobody's reciting Shakespeare, either.



Count the screens in this issue that contain a ferris wheel, and you may win yourself something better to do! ... Just kidding. What's better than counting ferris wheels?

HAWKTOWN AND Z BOYZ

PSM BUY OR DIE!

Tony Hawk's American Wasteland

Rage helps us skate better

TONY HAWK'S AMERICAN WASTELAND

PUBLISHED BY Activision

MADE BY Neversoft

HOW MUCH? $49.99

ESRB RATING Teen

MULTIPLAYER 8 player online 2 player co-op in classic mode

DIFFICULTY Just like life

SUPPORT +Progressive scan +Widescreen +Dolby Pro Logic II +EyeToy

The seventh in *Tony Hawk's* epic legacy of genre-defining extreme sport simulators is, without question, Neversoft's most massive undertaking. Programmers have a derogatory term for the kind of function accumulation that *THAW* takes to absurd lengths, and that term is "cruft" (also known as "too many trick" syndrome). This game demands the utilization of every single inch of the huge Los Angeles-based environments in order to grind, slap, natas spin, and bert slide through a vast library of missions.

Admittedly, after six previous games' worth of added moves, most of *THAW* feels like an enormous tutorial... but it's an incredibly fun and action-packed one. You can soak hours into crafting that ultimate, flawless line where each trick nailed is a testament to your skateboarding skills.

In addition to the gargantuan single-player story mode (which is, thankfully, less juvenile than *THUG 2*), *THAW* serves up an amazing array of customization options. Design a skater, create a whole, mid-sized park out of random city detritus using a surprisingly simple interface. Plus, if skating's booked you on a trip to Borington, *THAW* allows gamers to whip out a fly BMX ride, complete with its own set of unique tricks. We still think the Hawk should take a year off, but this is nonetheless a great game. **GABE GRAZIANI**

PSM SCORE 8.0

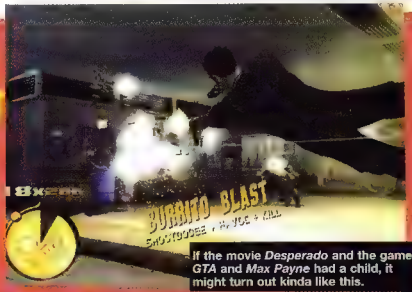
DEAD KENNEDYS
+Tons of tricks and customization. Last year's *Jackass*-style plot didn't return.

MICHAEL BOLTON
–Severely challenging and prone to "you screwed up, do it ALL over again!" issues.

TOTALLY LOCO

Total Overdose: A Gunslinger's Tale in Mexico

Once upon a time in Mexico



If the movie *Desperado* and the games *GTA* and *Max Payne* had a child, it might turn out kinda like this.

PSM SCORE 7.0

DESPERADO
+Loco Moves make the game fun, action-packed, and over-the-top; cool music.

DESPERATE
–Too linear and short; cars don't handle well; some glitches hurt gameplay.

+PUBLISHED BY Eidos Interactive **+MADE BY** Deadline Games **+HOW MUCH?** $39.99 **+ESRB** Mature **+MULTIPLAYER** None **+DIFFICULTY** Adjustable **+SUPPORTS** None

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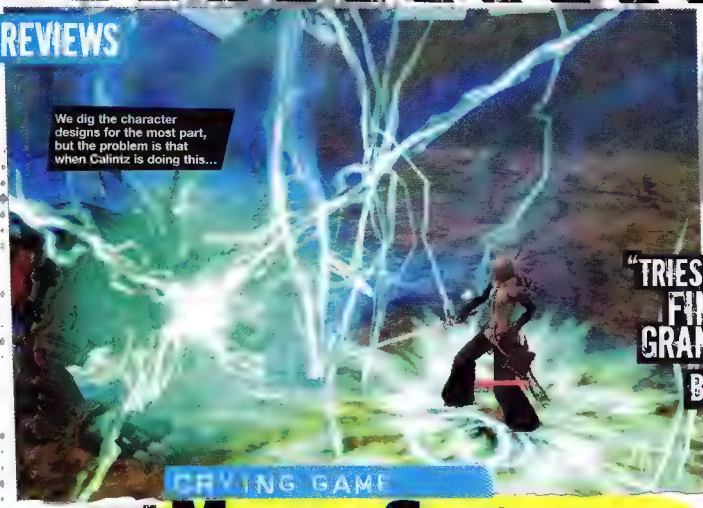


We dig the character designs for the most part, but the problem is that when Calintz is doing this...

...everyone else is just standing there doing this.

"TRIES HARD TO REPLICATE FINAL FANTASY X'S GRANDEUR AND ELEGANCE, BUT FAILS BADLY"

CRYING GAME

Magna Carta: Tears of Blood

Definitely exotic, but fights a poor fight

MAGNA CARTA: TEARS OF BLOOD

PUBLISHED BY Atlus

MADE BY SoftMax

HOW MUCH? $54.99

ESRB RATING Teen

MULTIPLAYER None

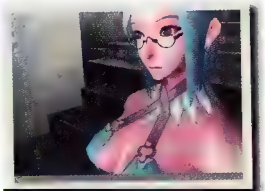
DIFFICULTY Average

SUPPORTS +None

This Korean-developed RPG tries hard to replicate *Final Fantasy X's* grandeur and elegance, but falls tragically short. It tells a typical tale of humans vs. demi-humans, conveyed via amateurish real-time cut scenes, and although the 2D character art is lavish and exotic, the 3D models seem very stiff and unimpressive.

The big problem is a crippled battle system. You can run around at will, but an onscreen meter, which fills as time passes, determines when you can attack. It's very similar to the ATB meter used in *Final Fantasy VII*, but with one huge flaw: instead of every character having their own meter, there's only one meter for the whole party. Thus, it plays out like this: the meter fills, the character you happen to be controlling (you can swap at will) attacks, and the two you aren't controlling just stand there completely oblivious. Then, everyone has to wait for the meter to recharge again.

For the lucky character who gets to attack, timed button presses unleash different moves and spells, but they're not enough to keep these slow-playing, slow-loading battles from ultimately proving dull and tedious. It's possible to slog through to the end of *Magna Carta*, but without much of a compelling story or rewarding gameplay, there just not enough reason to do so. **BENJAMIN TURNER**



"Help me, doctor! I got these glasses, but I still can't seem to see my toes..."

PSM SCORE 5.5

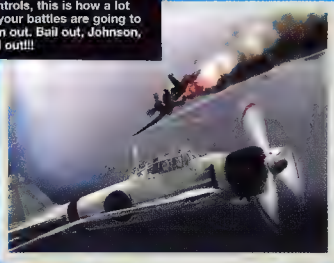
FRIENDLY WINK
+Character designs are pretty, and the story keeps moving. Voice work is decent.

BLOODY TEARS
-Gameplay is unintuitive. Dull graphics, lame cinemas and slow battles irritate.

MISSED IT BY THAT MUCH

Heroes of the Pacific

Doesn't quite catch the third wire



With those damn fidgety controls, this is how a lot of your battles are going to turn out. Bail out, Johnson, bail out!!!

PSM SCORE 7.5

P-51 MUSTANG
+Great graphics and sound effects. We finally get a WWII air combat game!

BREWSTER BUFFALO
-The controls are very fidgety; should have included a sensitivity slider.

+**PUBLISHED BY** Ubisoft + **MADE BY** Red Mile + **HOW MUCH?** $49.99 + **ESRB** Teen +**MULTIPLAYER** Online Multiplay and LAN multiplay + **DIFFICULTY** Tough... damn sensitive control scheme... + **SUPPORTS** Online and LAN multiplay

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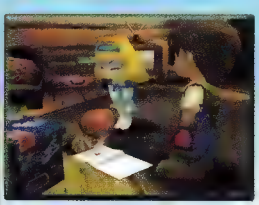

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EVERYONE

E

Alcohol Reference
Suggestive Themes

ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

PlayStation®2

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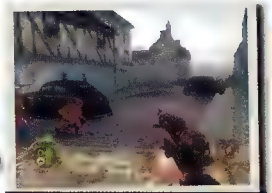
"IT'S NEAR GAMEPLAY NIRVANA"

If there's one gun in the game that demands respect, it's this one.

They might not look the best, but at least you'll remember their names at the end of the day.



Chances are, this exact street still exists today in a similar condition.

NO RUN AND GUN

Brothers in Arms: Earned in Blood

PSM BUY OR DIE!

Fleshed out and nearly perfect

BROTHERS IN ARMS: EARNED IN BLOOD

PUBLISHED BY Ubisoft

MADE BY Gearbox/Ubisoft Shanghai

HOW MUCH? $49.99

ESRB RATING Mature

MULTIPLAYER 4-player online, 2-player offline

DIFFICULTY Average

SUPPORTS +Online play +USB Headset

There have been so many cliché WWII shooters that it has actually become cliché to say we're tired of them. But after playing *Brothers in Arms: Earned in Blood*, we've experienced a delightful and unexpected epiphany: we're *not* sick of WWII games; we're just sick of *bad* WWII games.

BiA: EiB doesn't stray far from its predecessor's roots — you still command small squads of soldiers using the game's elegant suppression and assault interface. Even the storyline overlaps the former game's, with many if the same events, told from the perspective of a different combat soldier.

EiB embraces the first *BiA's* flanking tactics more than ever, honing its effectiveness in varying conditions. Similarly, enemies react in surprisingly clever ways to your movements: running away, thus negating your flanking maneuver, or even counter-flanking. This dynamic saves the game from a grisly paint-by-numbers-gameplay death. It's almost gameplay nirvana, as you're constantly strategizing and re-strategizing, giving orders and taking cover.

It's almost counterintuitive to think we'd praise a sequel so similar to its forebear, but outside of a few random AI quirks and a dated look, this is as intense and refined a shooter as can be. No, the WWII genre is not dead. This game is proof. **KAISER HWANG**

PSM SCORE 9.0

TACTICS
+ Incredibly intense and intelligent shooting; believable characters.

ANTICS
− Enemy AI sometimes too good; graphics need an update.

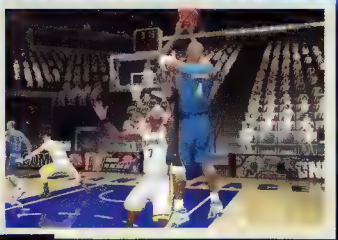
BACK IN THE GAME

NBA 06

Live the life of an NBA star — minus the bling

NBA 06 is the Kevin Garnett of basketball sims: a hardcore commitment to the game, illustrious career potential, and a non-flashy style all wrapped around solid skills. In fact, this rebound from 989 Sports puts Sony back in the game with the other guys.

"The Life" career mode [illegible] anything we've seen in a sports game. It's a full-fledged story mode, packed with cutscenes and some actual drama. You start out as a second round draft pick and muscle your way [illegible]



Sony gets itself back in the playoffs with this one, thanks to a great career mode and much-improved on-the-court action.

PSM SCORE 7.5

DUNK
+Career mode that's both big and worth your time. Plays way better than before.

FOUL
−Some animations are awkward, and can drag down your abilities and the pace.

+PUBLISHED BY Sony **+ MADE BY** SCEA Sports **+ HOW MUCH?** $39.99 **+ ESRB** Teen **+ MULTIPLAYER** 4 player Online, 2-8 player offline **+ DIFFICULTY** Private **+ SUPPORTS** Pro Logic II, Online/offline multiplay, Progressive Scan, Widescreen, EyeToy

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"GOOD ENOUGH TO APPEAL TO GAMERS WHO DON'T KNOW VIDEL FROM MAIJIN BUU"

The CPU is brutal, and this still isn't *Tekken*, but once you've learned play defense, this game plays pretty darn well.

Be careful when fighting in the tournament — it's way too easy to lose because of a "ring out" in this arena.

The special attack animations have gotten much shorter than in the last game, but it really improves the pace and flow of combat.

GREAT BALLS OF FIRE

PSM BUY OR DIE!

Dragon Ball Z: Budokai Tenkaichi

This is the one

DRAGON BALL Z: BUDOKAI TENKAICHI

PUBLISHED BY Atari

MADE BY Spike

HOW MUCH? $49.99

ESRB RATING Teen

MULTIPLAYER 2 player offline

DIFFICULTY Average

SUPPORT +Offline multiplay for two players

Hey, a *DBZ* game worth raving about! In *Tenkaichi*, the fourth *Budokai* game, developer Spike *(Fire Pro Wrestling)* has crafted a fighter good enough to appeal even to gamers who don't know Videl from Maijin Buu.

The first big improvement is in the newfound mobility of the characters. You can finally fly freely all around the big, destructible arenas. The fighting engine seems shallow and cheap at first: the "energy blast, charge while they're down, repeat" system works a bit too well. However, as you learn the nuances of dodges, blocks, and counters, additional depth is revealed, and the emphasis on flight and energy attacks, in addition to melee, feels right for the *DBZ* universe. On the downside, when combined with a wide array of melee, distance, and special attacks, dashes and counters, this mobility leads to a complex control scheme that can take awhile to absorb.

Mid-match transformations (when a fighter morphs into a more powerful form) are gone, and the camera isn't perfect — oh, and the CPU is merciless and relentless. Don't get frustrated though, because the solid graphics, huge roster (60 to 90 characters, depending upon how you count), and modes that include massive tournaments and somewhere around 100 scenario matches taken from the series make up for it. **ERIC BRATCHER**

PSM SCORE 8.0

GREAT APE
+Huge roster packed with game modes, looks good, feels like real *DBZ* fights.

KAKAROTTEN
−There's got to be a better control configuration. Odd balance, erratic difficulty.

TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE

The Matrix: Path of Neo

Neither reloaded nor a revolution

With thoughts that we'd finally be able to experience those unforgettable Matrix moments that were seared into our heads some six years ago — early, firsthand looks at the game even showed remarkable promise — how could we not have great expectations for *The Matrix: Path of Neo?*

Unfotunately, the final version is a pretty harsh reality check. This game is clearly rough around the edges and relies heavily on its license as a crutch. The barely-good-enough controls and inconsistent production values — which make us wonder if, like *Enter the Matrix* before it, *PoN* isn't really finished yet — make the action more watchable than playable, and best left to Matrix die-hards. There are still a few highlights though, and they parallel those of the films: peaking early on with the now-legendary lobby scene and leveling out from there.

Unfortunately, a larger portion of the game is spent drudging through new acts that, although penned by The Wachowski Brothers, are mostly tired, hokey, or both. Neo-punks and giant ant-men? We'll stick with red pills and white rabbits. **KAISER HWANG**

Matrix fans will find the momentum to finish the game, while everyone else takes the blue pill.

PSM SCORE 6.5

WHOA!
+Finally, gamers and *Matrix* fans get to play out Neo's great movie moments.

NOOOO!
− Production all over the place; new story content weak; controls too loose.

+**PUBLISHED BY** Atari + **MADE BY** Shiny + **HOW MUCH?** $49.99 + **ESRB** Teen + **MULTIPLAYER** Nope + **DIFFICULTY** Average + **SUPPORTS** Dolby Pro Logic II

psmonline.com

Thank goodness the police are back in force, *Hot Pursuit* 2-style.

WORTHY PURSUITS

NEED FOR SPEED: MOST WANTED

PUBLISHED BY
EA

MADE BY
EA Canada

HOW MUCH?
49.99

ESRB RATING
Teen

MULTIPLAYER
2-player versus, online and off

DIFFICULTY
Turbo

SUPPORTS
+Multiplayer

Need for Speed: Most Wanted

Welcome back, Smokey!

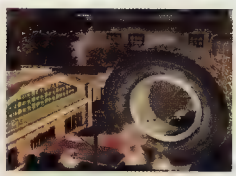
PSM BUY OR DIE!

Need for Speed never really changes, you know – it just gets more like itself. Thus, *Most Wanted* comes to us as the incestuous love child of *NFS: Underground 2* and *NFS: Hot Pursuit 2*.

After a lengthy FMV intro ("Now with Josie Maran and twice the U.S. RDA of Heinous Bad Acting!") the game settles you into working through the "Blacklist", the local racing gang that stole your car. You do this by getting into chases with the cops and winning street races until your "rep" gets high enough for a Blacklist member to notice you, then you race him or her for "pinks". Use the money to buy a new car or upgrade the old one. Rinse. Repeat.

Hint: complete all the races. You'll need the money. Also, it's almost always better to buy a new car instead of upgrading.

It's all good. With the fuzz back in the mix, the chases are higher octane than ever, and Hollywood-style "pursuit breakers" scattered around let you do things like knock over a water tower to block them. It's a real hoot. As is usual for the series, the cars handle a little heavy and spin out a little too easily, but you get used to it, and the sense of speed is powerful, while rival racers drive like real people, not invincible machines. Burnout is still prettier and faster, but *Most Wanted* is the best *Need for Speed* since *Hot Pursuit 2*, if not the best ever. **JEFF LUNDRIGAN**



The Pursuit Breakers are basically environmental events that can affect the passability of the roads... big time.

PSM SCORE 8.5

HUE-SHIFT PAINT
+Excellent sense of speed, nicely tricky courses, decent selection of cars.

RUST SPOTS
–Way too easy to spin out; some walls have invisible edges that hook your car.

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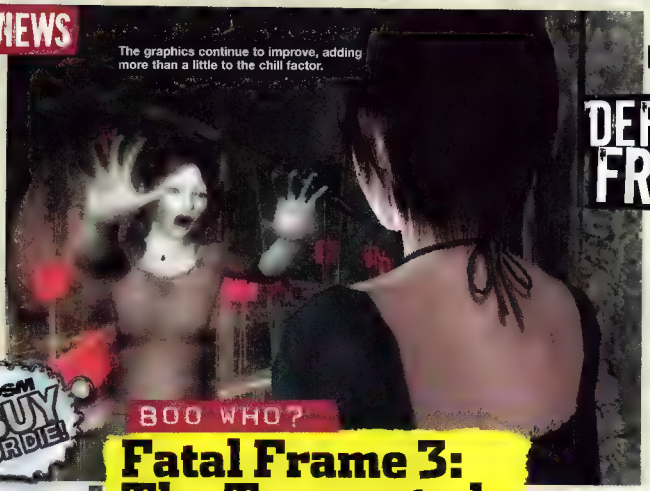

The graphics continue to improve, adding more than a little to the chill factor.

"IT WILL DEFINITELY STILL FREAK YOU OUT"

This is the view through the Camera Obscura. Being forced to stand still and let the baddies get close is tough on one's nerves.

PSM BUY OR DIE!

BOO WHO?

Fatal Frame 3: The Tormented

Don't take my Kodachrome away!

FATAL FRAME 3: THE TORMENTED

PUBLISHED BY Tecmo

MADE BY Project Zero

HOW MUCH? $49.99

ESRB RATING Mature

MULTIPLAYER Nope

DIFFICULTY Average to hard

SUPPORT +Progressive scan +Widescreen

Resident Evil and *Silent Hill* may get more acclaim, but Tecmo's *Fatal Frame* series still offers some nasty chills. Waiting until the spooks are right up on you so you can snap a first-person "Fatal Frame" with your magic camera is seriously frightening. Adding to this appeal is the series' deeply emotional plotlines, with well-developed characters pulled into twisted, unpredictable stories. In fact, *Fatal Frame 2: Crimson Butterfly* was arguably the single saddest game ever made.

FF3: The Tormented doesn't quite one-up *FF2:CB*. A photographer, Rei, has been wracked with guilt over the death of her boyfriend. On assignment in a "haunted" house, Rei illogically discovers an antique photo of him, triggering a frightening waking dream and a painful tattoo that begins growing on her skin.

FF3 borrows from *Silent Hill 4: The Room*, grounding Rei (and her friend Miku, actually the first game's heroine) in her apartment, while leaving the haunting to her dreams. This, along with the game's habit of switching between three lead characters, effectively pulls you one step out from the action, slightly lessening the game's immersion and emotional impact. It's a small mis-step, but a vital one.

However, "not quite as good as the best ever" is still pretty damn good, and *The Tormented* will definitely still freak you out. **JEFF LUNDRIGAN**

Miku's the strongest ghost buster, having lived through the first game, and stealthy third character Rei is related to *FF2:CB*'s Mio and Mayu

PSM SCORE 8.0

THE SPOOKY
+Moody graphics; dark story; frightening *Ju-On* inspired ghosts. Serious chills... brrr...

THE OOKY
–Coming back to the "real" world was a mistake; some puzzles are too obscure.

CHINESE TAKE OUT

Dynasty Warriors 5: Xtreme Legends

PSM BUY OR DIE!

One hell of an expansion pack

If the 48-or-so included heroes aren't enough, you can create your own character now, right down to their height, weight, and weaponry.

It would be easy to blast this new iteration of *Dynasty Warriors* for being just more of the same. The series' basic premise hasn't changed since 2000.

But it's hard not to like *Xtreme Legends*. It adds a few new features to an already solid *DW5* but it's a full-fledged standalone product as well — and it's only 30 bones.

The best bit of *Xtreme Legends* has to be Destiny mode, in which you create your own character — yeah, you can do that now — and work your way up through the ranks to become the commander of the entire army. There are also 18 new maps, a new Novice difficulty setting, and various other tweaks.

The point is, despite a premise that's quickly growing long in the tooth and the odd graphical issue, there's just so much to do in *Xtreme Legends* that any fan will need to pick it up. It's a great entry point for noobs, too. Just don't expect a huge departure from previous *DW* games. **GREG SEWART**

PSM SCORE 8.0

XTREME
+Destiny mode adds a bit of role-playing to an already solid action game.

LAME
–Enemies pop-up out of nowhere, and you have no real camera control.

+PUBLISHED BY Koei **+ MADE BY** Koei Omega Force **+ HOW MUCH?** $29.99 **+ ESRB** Teen **+MULTIPLAYER** None **+ DIFFICULTY** Adjustable **+ SUPPORTS** Pro Logic II

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– GAMESPOT.COM

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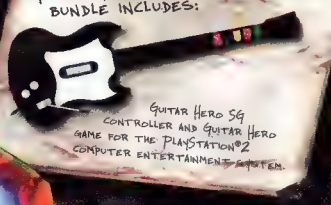

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TEEN
T
Mild Lyrics
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

"RANDY LIKED IT SO MUCH, HE MIGHT ACTUALLY START TAKING GUITAR LESSONS"

The easy level of difficulty sticks to only three fret buttons. But as you get better, all five will come into play.

DOUBLE PLATINUM

PSM BUY OR DIE!

You can play classic Gibson axes like the Les Paul Goldtop and Flying V. You may even find yourself on the cover of *Guitar World* magazine.

Guitar Hero

A fret-burning, hard rocking good time

GUITAR HERO

PUBLISHED BY Red Octane

MADE BY Harmonix

HOW MUCH? $69.99 (bundle)

ESRB RATING Teen

MULTIPLAYER 2 Player versus

DIFFICULTY Easy to shredding

SUPPORT +guitar controller

PSM SCORE 9.0

OZZY
+Awesome music, ridiculously fun, wide range of difficulties, great guitar controller.

KELLY
–Franz Ferdinand is cool, but are they really guitar rock? $70 is quite a bit.

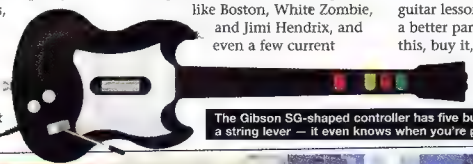
It has always pained us that Konami's rock-tastic guitar-playing rhythm-action import *Guitar Freaks* has never come to the U.S. But, thanks to the even better *Guitar Hero*, the ache has been replaced by head banging, fist pumping, finger horns throwing delight.

Fundamentally, *Guitar Hero* is very much like Sony's games *Frequency* and *Amplitude*. A song plays, and you press buttons as notes of the corresponding color fall down the screen.

The difference — and it's big — is that the you're tickling the frets of a special, guitar-shaped controller with five "frets" (actually buttons) at the head, a lever that that you strum like you would actual strings, and a working whammy bar. It even has tilt sensors — you trigger your bonus meter by holding the axe vertically, in a rock star pose. Plus, you're playing 30 loud and proud arena guitar rock tunes from legends like Boston, White Zombie, and Jimi Hendrix, and even a few current groups like The Donnas, Sum 41, and Audioslave. There are some cool unlockable bonus songs from unsigned groups, too.

It's crazy-big fun — Randy liked it so much, he might actually start taking guitar lessons — and we can't imagine a better party game. If you can afford this, buy it, and rock on!.

ERIC "HAIR BAND" BEATCHER

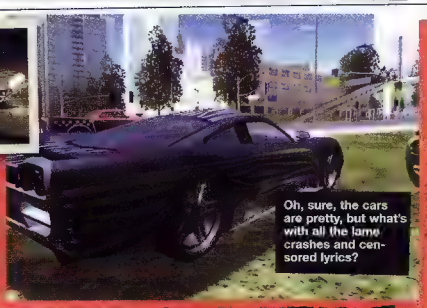


The Gibson SG-shaped controller has five buttons, a working tremolo bar, a string lever — it even knows when you're posing like a rock-and-roller.

CRASHED

L.A. Rush

The rushed and mildly perturbed



Oh, sure, the cars are pretty, but what's with all the lame crashes and censored lyrics?

PSM SCORE 6.5

THE FAST
+Good speed, fair handling, and a large city to drive around in.

THE FURIOUS
–Lame crashes, average everything else, and censored lyrics on the soundtrack.

+**PUBLISHED BY** Midway + **MADE BY** Pitbull Syndicate + **HOW MUCH?** $49.99 + **ESRB** Mature +**MULTIPLAYER** 2 player split screen + **DIFFICULTY** Wrenching + **SUPPORTS** Dolby Pro Logic II, USB wheels: Logitech Driving Force and DF Pro, Formula Force GP, offline multiplayer (2P)

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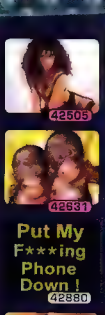

Put My F***ing Phone Down ! 42880

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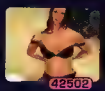
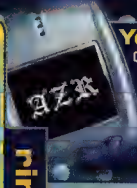


ringtones

Top Ten

82737 - 50 Cent - Disco Inferno
82735 - 50 Cent feat. Olivia - Candy Shop
82571 - Game Theme - Super Mario Broth.
82730 - Game Theme - Zelda 2
82574 - Green Day - Blvd Of Broken D...
82738 - Gwen Stefanie - Hollaback Girl
82575 - Jay-Z & Linkin Park - Numb/Encore
82633 - Notorious B.I.G. - Big Poppa
82665 - Slipknot - Duality
82736 - The Game/50 Cent - Hate It Or Love It
82572 - Alicia Keys - Karma
82765 - Alma - Este Ritmo calentito
82671 - Amanda Perez - Angel
82570 - Ciara feat. Missy Elliot - 1,2 Step
82590 - Dr. Dre - Nuthin' But A „G" Thang
82591 - Dr. Dre - The Next Episode
82576 - Fabolous - Breathe
82747 - Gorillaz - Good Feel Inc
82667 - Green Day - American Idiot
82649 - Hoobastank - The Reason
82599 - Jadakiss - Knock Yourself Out



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36020 - Two Ladies
36095 - Police Horn
36028 - Toilet Flush
36036 - Fire Siren
36041 - Large Burp
36047 - Start Racing Car
36074 - Uh baby, bad boy
36088 - NASA Countdown
36093 - Devilish Laughing

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"TAKES THE 007 SERIES DOWN A UNIQUE, RETRO CUL-DE-SAC"

Not everything here was part of the original film, but much of it is, and is instantly recognizable.

This may turn out to be the only Bond game with Sean Connery, seeing as how the 007 role was just passed on to that one guy from that movie.

Some of the environments come off looking a little strange, with plain textures, but cool smoke and steam effects.

BACK IN THE U.S.S.R.

From Russia With Love

For those who like their war served cold

FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE

PUBLISHED BY Electronic Arts

MADE BY Electronic Arts

HOW MUCH? $49.99

ESRB RATING Teen

MULTIPLAYER 4-player offline

DIFFICULTY Adjustable

SUPPORTS +Widescreen +Offline multiplay

From Russia With Love takes the 007 series down a unique, retro cul-de-sac, filled with beautiful babes, enigmatic villains, and some thrilling bits of derring-do.

Filling out the stealthy intrigue and frantic action are some interesting gameplay conceits: "Bond focus" enables you to target specific areas on each goon's body. If an enemy has a grenade on his belt, shoot it. That gorilla with the gatling? Shave him of his armor, and save scads of precious ammo. Sure, other games have done similar things, but it's still fun.

A bevy of gadgets from Q helps to keep you out of trouble as well, whether it's a laser watch that can deliver damage from the other side of bullet-proof glass, or a remote controlled, exploding, ventilation shaft-friendly Q-Copter. The variety of experiences, from boat to car to jetpack, keeps repetition to a minimum, while "research points," an inventory of weapons, and miscellaneous goodies lend the vaguest of RPG whiffs and improve replayability.

The Bond-like moments tend to be surprisingly weak, and the graphics are a bit rough in places, but the rich audio is magical, especially as driven by the score's signature bombast. Even if you've never seen the film, *From Russia With Love* deserves a look and a listen. **CAMERON LEWIS**

PSM SCORE 7.5

SHAKEN
+60s feel, retro story, intriguing mission variety, "Bond focus" aim points.

STIRRED
– Twitchy vehicle sequences, some cheesy enemy scripting, rough graphics.

CLASSICS & FRIENDS

Taito Legends

A few you love and a lot you don't know

The emulation is perfect, so believe it or not, the pink crocodiles are legit.

As the 29 games in this compilation show, Taito has cleanly made some big contributions to the arcade industry: *Jungle Hunt*, *Bubble Bobble* (precursor to *Puzzle Bobble* – which is missing), *Elevator Action*, *Phoenix*, *Zoo Keeper*, *Rastan*, *Operation Wolf*, *Operation Thunderbolt*, *Space Invaders*, and *Space Invaders II*.

The other two-thirds of the compilation are less known in the U.S.: *Battle Shark*, *Colony 7*, *Continental Circus*, *The Electric Yo-yo*, *Exzisus*, *Gladiator*, *Great Swordsman*, *New Zealand Story*, *Ninja Kids*, *Plotting*, *Puzzle Pon*, *Rainbow Islands*, *Return of the Invaders*, *Space Scramble*, *Super Qix*, *Thunder Fox*, *Tokio*, *Tube-it*, and *Volfied*. Some are quite good, though.

There are some big hits missing (the original *Qix*, *Arkanoid*, *Mat Mania*, *Darius Gaiden*...) but the emulation is dead-on, your controller's analog sensitivity is adjustable, and there are historical images, stories and interviews for fans. Hopefully this will do well and we'll soon see a volume 2, and maybe some of Taito's newer games, like the 2D shooter *Border Down* and the *Battle Gear* racers. **ERIC BATMALE**

PSM SCORE 7.0

LOTSA TOKENS
+A generous helping of classic hits and b-sides, with tweakable analog controls

NO QUARTERS
– Missing the original *Qix*, *Arkanoid*, *Darius Gaiden* and others; no current hits.

+**PUBLISHED BY** Sega/Empire + **MADE BY** Empire/Atomic Planet/Rezorworks + **HOW MUCH?** $19.99 + **ESRB** Teen + **DIFFICULTY** Varies +**MULTIPLAYER** Offline, varies with game + **SUPPORTS** Offline Multiplay (game dependent)

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9/10, "Buy or Die" Award – PSM

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4.5/5, "Editors Choice" Award – GameSpot

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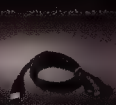

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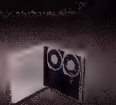

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For the record, it's a good practice to always face away from flaming boulders rolling toward you... and while you're at it, run like Hell.

It's not the meat hooks in the flesh that hurt the most — it's the fact that he's about to freefall several stories as well.

"FOR A GOOD WHILE THIS IS WICKEDLY EVEN PERVERSELY FUN"

PRINCESS DIE ARIES

TRAPT

PUBLISHED BY Tecmo

MADE BY Paon

HOW MUCH? $49.99

ESRB RATING Mature

MULTIPLAYER Nope

DIFFICULTY Easy

SUPPORTS Nothin' fancy

Trapt

Introducing PS2's first gothic survival game

Like its PSone ancestors (the three-game *Deception* series), *Trapt* casts you as a helpless young girl, this time named Princess Allura.

Well, not completely helpless. When your father is assassinated and your stepmother sics a horde of assassins and mercenaries upon you, you discover that you bear the "Fiend's Mark". That means you're destined to harvest souls for an undead demon-type thingy.

Your methods are brutal, too. Allura runs around her mansion's (and later her castle's) rooms, luring her pursuers into deadly traps that the player has arranged: flaming boulders, electric penduli, and so on. In addition, each room is equipped with over-the-top environmental hazards — for example, a giant music box that grinds up its victims — and you get bonuses for stringing several traps together.

For a good while, this is wickedly — even perversely — fun. Unfortunately, the whole thing wears thin quickly. You can make new devices and open new rooms, but for every truly inspired trap there's another that's just kinda lame, and as the enemies get deadlier, you're often forced to rely on a small handful of tried and true methods, over and over. Plus, the graphics are rather behind the curve, making this a better rental than a purchase.

JEFF LUNDRIGAN

PSM SCORE 6.5

QUICK & PAINLESS
+You can't go wrong with playing as a teen babe; some of the traps are delightful.

SLOW SUFFERING
–Gets repetitive pretty quickly, and the graphics are as flat as the personalities.

QUICK HITS

The Chronicles of Narnia

The idea of a team-based game featuring the four differently-skilled Pevensie children to work together is solid. Some of the kid-specific skills make sense — Lucy is the smallest, so only she can get through the air vents, etc.

But on the whole, the overall challenge and abilities are contrived that it's laughable. Want to use your "fashion" only Susan can operate that high-tech device. Need some? Just beat the crap out of every piece of furniture you see — especially. Oh, and your siblings tend to just stand around and watch you take a beating during battle. Ingrates.

BRYANT BURNETT

As Susan was mauled by wolves, the rest of the family just stood and watched. Turns out, they hated Susan.

PSM SCORE 4.0

ASLAN
+Great presentation, like LotR games; cutscenes have us stoked for the film.

WHITE WITCH
–Lame puzzles, lack of multiplayer, the AI likes to see sibs get pounded.

+PUBLISHED BY Buena Vista Games **+MADE BY** Travellers Tales **+ HOW MUCH?** $49.99 **+ ESRB RATING** Teen **+MULTIPLAYER** None **+ DIFFICULTY** Adjustable **+ SUPPORTS** Widescreen, Prog. scan

Zatch Bell!: Mamodo Battles

Most anime-based fighting games take out depth and complexity in exchange for mass kiddy appeal, and *Zatch Bell!* is a textbook case. Offering only a bare minimum of moves to master, the fast, superb combination makes developer Eighting's own *Bloody Roar* look like *Virtua Fighter 4*. Lots of lights and nice effects like character-boosting mode offer some variety, but not enough to prevent repetition from setting in due to the extreme lack of combo depth. Newbies and fans of the show will find plenty to enjoy here, but the rest of us should just stick to anime tournaments and Bandai's other fighting efforts.

JEFF LUNDRIGAN

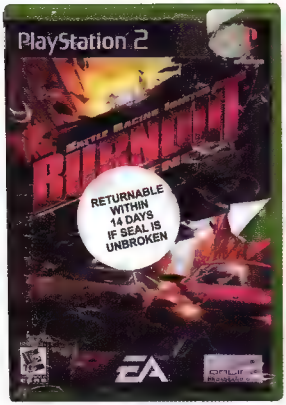
Little boy in a dress who is actually a trandimensional combat demon?

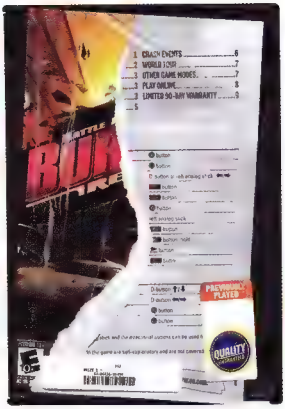
PSM SCORE 6.0

FUN FOR KIDS...
+Bright graphics do the anime justice, the cast is very well-represented.

...NO ONE ELSE
–It plays pretty much like you'd expect. A glass of Tang has more depth.

+PUBLISHED BY Bandai **+ MADE BY** Eighting **+ HOW MUCH?** $39.99 **+ ESRB RATING** Everyone **+MULTIPLAYER** 2 player offline **+ DIFFICULTY** Easy **+ SUPPORTS** Offline multiplayer





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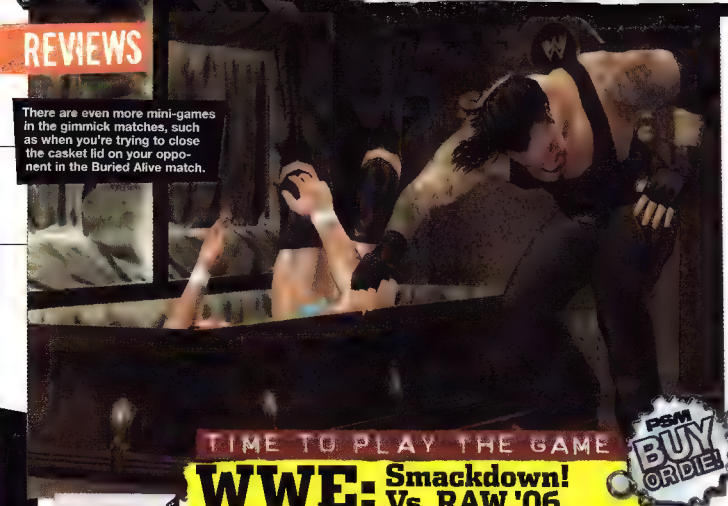


There are even more mini-games in the gimmick matches, such as when you're trying to close the casket lid on your opponent in the Buried Alive match.

"CERTAINLY THE BEST-LOOKING WWE GAME TO DATE"

You can slam your opponents into certain environmental objects for extra damage, like in *Def Jam Fight for NY*.

TIME TO PLAY THE GAME

PSM BUY OR DIE!

WWE: Smackdown! Vs. RAW '06

More stuff to keep you busy until next year!

WWE: SMACKDOWN! VS. RAW '06

PUBLISHED BY THQ

MADE BY Yuke's

HOW MUCH? $49.99

MULTIPLAYER 6 player offline, 4 player online

ESRB RATING Teen

DIFFICULTY Adjustable

SUPPORTS PSP Connectivity

We know — another year, another *WWE* game... but there's more to this game than just a roster update — although, due to the ever-changing nature of the real-world WWE, the game's roster isn't entirely up-to-date either — there are some neat new features, too.

It's certainly the best-looking *WWE* game to date, and it helps that the story mode cinematics are fully voiced — like last year — and more properly lip-synched. Plus, there are more mid-match mini-games that add even more interactivity, like precisely timing a button press to escape from a Sleeper Hold.

Sadly, this game, like every other wrestling game before it, suffers from clipping and collision detection issues. Also, it's a strange sight when you're in a tag team match and one of your opponents clearly attempts to grab you, but ends up grabbing his partner instead and locks him in a submission hold. It rarely happens, but it shouldn't happen at all.

Still, the game has the deep create-a-character the series has always had, with a brand new create-an-entrance feature to boot, and the new GM Mode — where you draft Superstars, organize matches, and just try to have the best brand in all of Sports Entertainment — adds some longevity. It may not be a perfect game, but it's still a lot of fun. **JUSTIN CHENG**

It's even easier to assign titles to Superstars now, so your in-game champs can match the real-world ones.

PSM SCORE 8.0

THAT'S COOL
+ Best-looking wrestling game around; even more customization than before.

GAME OVER
– Still has clipping and collision detection problems; commentary is still annoying.

QUICK HITS?

World Tour Poker

As disappointing as *World Series Poker* was, *World Poker Tour* isn't even that good. The single-player game is hideously slow. There's a "Fold & Skip" option, but very little money seems to change hands among the other players when you do this (which sucks if you're trying to let all the other players eliminate each other). It's as if the game can't even be bothered to play out the hand internally and just assigns results at random. The graphics are mostly serviceable, but the AI is all over the map. With *Stacked* and *World Championship Poker 2* pending, deal this one out. **JEFF LUNDRIGAN**

We're not shocked at all the bandwagon on bargain games — we're shocked at how bad so many of 'em are.

PSM SCORE 4.0

FULL HOUSE
+ Um, all 52 cards are represented, you can play online... against people... and stuff...

SUCKER BET
– Bad interface, so-so graphics, peculiar AI. Many strong competitors coming soon

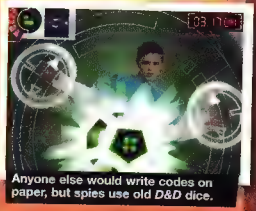
PUBLISHED BY 2K Games + **MADE BY** Coresoft + **HOW MUCH?** $19.99 + **MULTIPLAYER** Tons of folks online + **ESRB** Everyone + **DIFFICULTY** Varies + **SUPPORTS** Online play

EyeToy: Operation Spy

Players of this sneak-'em-up can use the EyeToy to skydive through rings, decipher codes, zoom in on a tracking device... it even scans your face and verifies your identity when you enter "locked" menus.

Most promising is a side mode that can take snapshots in much higher resolution than the EyeToy's usual muddiness and then send them to a printer (though just exactly how that works wasn't quite clear yet at press time).

It's nice to see EyeToy continually refined. However, *Operation Spy* is too short, simple and shallow for the serious gamer, and without multiplayer, its party appeal is minimal. **ERIC BRATCHER**



Anyone else would write codes on paper, but spies use old *D&D* dice.

PSM SCORE 5.5

DON ADAMS (RIP)
+ Does nice, new things with EyeToy. The high-res mode is quite cool.

SPY KIDS BRATS
– Still feels too much like a tech demo instead of an actual game. Lacks depth.

PUBLISHED BY Sony + **MADE BY** SCEE + **HOW MUCH?** $29.99 + **MULTIPLAYER** None + **ESRB** Everyone + **DIFFICULTY** Easy + **SUPPORTS** EyeToy

1) Use them as a ladder

50 uses for your

tokobot

10) Help you save the planet

18) Turn into a train

20) Help you when you're lost 21) Bake you bi

23) Spit out bombs at your foes 24) Arrange your vi ly 25) Fly you to high places

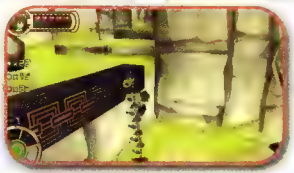
29) Help you lift heavy objects

33) Morph into a tank

Play it over and over and over

What will you do with yours?

41) Be your samurai warrior



ur spare PSP™ battery 50) Be your best friends

EVERYONE
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Mild Cartoon Violence
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

PlayStation Portable

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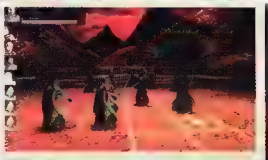
The AI is ruthless. Learn each battle's individual goals, and be prepared to play each scenario multiple times until you fulfill them exactly. Or play on easy ... ya sissy.



In addition to the heroes and enemies we know and love and hate, there are regular units like knights and orcs.

You can play either the light or dark campaign, which is a welcome touch.

YOU SHALL NOT PASS!

Lord of the Rings Tactics

More palatable than the sludge orcs drink

LORD OF THE RINGS TACTICS

PUBLISHED BY EA

MADE BY EA

HOW MUCH? $49.99

ESRB RATING Teen

MULTIPLAYER 2-player Ad-hoc

DIFFICULTY Average

SUPPORTS +Ad-hoc multiplay for two players.

LOTR games are notoriously hit and miss in terms of their ability to satisfy their own rabid fanbase, and *LOTR Tactics* exemplifies some of the best and worst features of this trend.

Hewing to the story-path from the films, *LOTR Tactics* follows the familiar fellowship on their journey to destroy the one ring of Sauron and divides the action into individual key battles. However, thanks to a clumsy, "everyone go at once" turn-taking system, divided into alternating 'movement' and 'combat' phases, this game often succeeds at frustrating tacticians and proving that even the best laid plans of mice and men tend to be utterly worthless. Players will frequently find their meticulously plotted maneuvers blocked by bloodthirsty, supposedly dim-witted, yet surprisingly tactically-minded orcs.

This constant blockading is arguably realistic, but it still saps much of the fun right out, even in multiplayer.

Still, the chance to play as the Fellowship or the Host or Mordor is a very cool thing, and there is definitely strategy and value here once you become acclimated to the game's atypical battle system. Fans will also love the cut-scenes that set up each level with genuine DVD quality film footage and the accuracy in the details of each scenario. **GABE GRAZIANI**

PSM SCORE 7.0

ELVES
+Cut-scenes directly taken from the films, stirring sound track, ad-hoc multiplayer.

ORCS
−Slow pace and cruel learning curve... you'll play some levels over and over again.

TERRORIST TANGO

Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex

Heavily armed anime machines with children's minds... worried yet?

Running and gunning with a robot spider watching your back is pretty novel — so don't shoot at it.

Terrorists are out to assassinate a government official, and it's up to your team to prevent it. Each mission, you choose one of three human characters and a Tachikoma — a sort of giant, robot spider who acts as your wingman — and arm them with weapons and equipment. The Tachikoma are actually quite cool, and you can even take control of its ass-kicking arsenal during many missions.

It sounds cool, but the execution is off. Everything feels stiff, and not because the female lead runs around in her underpants. The controls are just plain awkward, the levels uninspired, and the enemy AI sloppy. Add in a low level of challenge, and this combo just isn't very challenging or exciting. CPU A.I. isn't a problem in multiplayer, but that's ad-hoc only.

The PSP isn't blessed with a plethora of first-person shooters, and *Stand Alone Complex* isn't the worst game ever, but only the truly hardcore are going to be enthralled. **CAMERON LEWIS**

PSM SCORE 5.5

HEAVY METAL
+Customizable weapons load-outs, giving orders on the fly.

TIN FOIL
−Awkward control scheme and interface, no difficulty adjustment available.

+PUBLISHED BY Bandai **+ MADE BY** G-Artists **+ HOW MUCH?** $39.99 **+ ESRB** Teen **+ DIFFICULTY** Target practice **+MULTIPLAYER** 6-Player battle **+ DIFFICULTY** Target Practice **+ SUPPORTS** Ad-hoc multiplay

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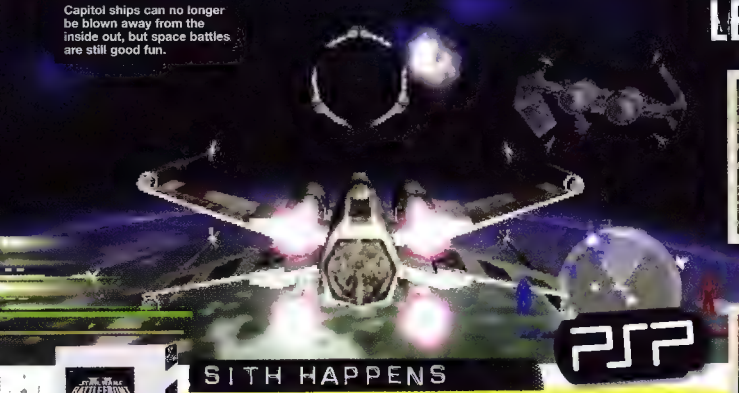
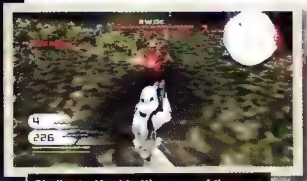
TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Use of Alcohol
Violence

ENTITY.ALL_CAP REBELCRUISER2

"THE HEART OF THE GAME IS LEFT INTACT"



Capitol ships can no longer be blown away from the inside out, but space battles are still good fun.



Similar to *Hunt* battles, one of the new variations casts you as a Stormtrooper cleansing a level of its inhabitants.

Vader against an Ewok. That sounds fair...

SITH HAPPENS

Star Wars Battlefront 2

Galactic war in the palm of your hand

STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT 2

PUBLISHED BY LucasArts

MADE BY Savage/Pandemic

HOW MUCH? $49.99

ESRB RATING Teen

MULTIPLAYER 4-player ad hoc, versus or co-op

DIFFICULTY Average

SUPPORT +Ad-hoc multiplay

I'm not a violent person. That said, if I ever meet the guy who decided the PSP only needed one analog stick instead of two, there is a very good chance that I am going to punch him right in the brain.

Why? Because that single stupid decision is the reason I have to write things like this: *Star Wars Battlefront II* has four selectable control schemes, but none of them are right. The more intuitive ones lack total functionality (for instance, the default scheme has no alternate fire button) and the more comprehensive ones are clunky. Thus, an awesome game blasts itself in the foot. Dammit.

That's not actually the only shortcoming. This is stripped down pretty heavily from the full-sized version. There are only 13 arenas (the full-sized version has 24), and many are simplified. For example, in space missions, the capitol ships' interiors no longer contain shield generators, engine cooling tanks, and so on. Also, multiplayer is not online; it's 2-4 player ad-hoc only. Argh.

On the plus side, the heart of the game is left intact despite this scaling back, including playable Jedi and several new units. There are even a few new mission variations: you might be collecting items or assassinating specific targets. There's just some unrealized potential here that keeps good from becoming great. **ERIC BRATCHER**

PSM SCORE 7.0

WAMPAS
+Core game is still here, and it's still fun. New match types are good.

GUNGANS
-No online, bummer controls, many elements are simplified a bit.

LITTLE PRINCE

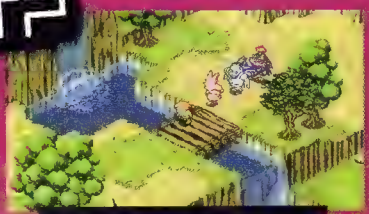
PoPoLoCrois

So many dragon swords, so little time

A tweaked version of a Japanese-only PS1 game, *PoPoLoCrois*' storybook environments and sharp anime-style FMVs tell the tale of a young prince named Pietro. He has just discovered that his mother, long thought dead, is still alive, but in a coma. So Pietro, his father's Dragon Sword in hand, sets out to find a cure for his mother's condition — which (of course) is tied up in an age-old struggle between dark and light forces. It's certainly nothing we haven't seen before, but paired with the game's simple battle system and its cute, archetypal cast of characters, it still works.

What doesn't work is the game's rough transition from console to handheld. Nothing really seems to fit: gorgeous 2D backgrounds blur so badly as you move across them that it could give you motion sickness, load times are plentiful, and that PSP analog stick just doesn't work with a simple 2D RPG. It's not ruined, but these technical snafus undo much of *PoPoLoCrois*' plentiful charm. **FRANCESCA REYES**

The battle system is fairly simple to operate.



Sure, the graphics aren't exactly next gen, but they're actually very artistically pleasing.

PSM SCORE 6.0

POPOLOCOOL
+Wonderful storybook feel to characters and backgrounds.

POPOLOCRAP
-The load times are bad. Scrolling across a screen blurs the backdrops – ugh.

+**PUBLISHED BY** Agetec + **MADE BY** SCEI + **HOW MUCH?** $39.99 + **ESRB** Everyone + **MULTIPLAYER** No + **DIFFICULTY** Expect some power-leveling + **SUPPORTS** Nothing special

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MATURE 17+
M
Blood
Violence
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

PlayStation.2

www.tecmogames.com

TECMO 100% GAMES

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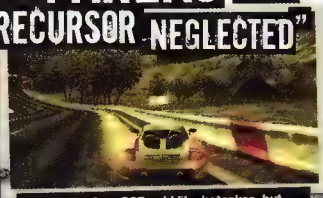
There are major improvements across the board, but we're most pleased with the return of the fuzz.

"MOST WANTED DOMINATES IN ALL THE AREAS ITS PRECURSOR NEGLECTED"



The first *NFS* on PSP sold like hotcakes, but wasn't that great. This one is, though.

WHOOP! WHOOP!

PSP

NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND: MOST WANTED 5-1-0

PUBLISHED BY EA

MADE BY EA Canada

HOW MUCH? $49.99

ESRB RATING Everyone

MULTIPLAYER 4-player ad hoc, 2-player online

DIFFICULTY Average

SUPPORT
+ Online play (2)
+ Offline multi (4)

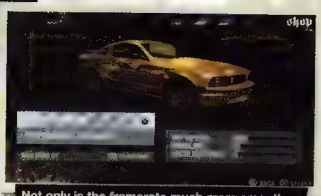
Need for Speed Underground: Most Wanted 5-1-0

Return of the road ruler

Need For Speed Underground Rivals was something of a disappointment on the PSP, dropping would-be lead feet into a repetitive land of choppy graphics with unacceptable framerates. Luckily, *Most Wanted 5-1-0* is not the sad console-cousin its predecessor was, and solidly thwarts these street-racing sorrows.

Everything in this iteration has been improved, and the addition of the five-oh in your rear-view adds a degree of drama left derelict since *Need for Speed's Hot Pursuit* era.

From improved reflection mapping on the user-pimped rides to a brand new library of knuckle-blanching courses, *Most Wanted* dominates in all the areas its precursor neglected. The tracks are long (though EA makes heavy use of track reversal in order to expand their usable life) and the action is significantly smoother at extremely high speeds. The absolute best thing about *Most Wanted* is still dusting the cops and your competition. The excitement of leading a seven-car pack of peace officers through a twisting downtown track as the sirens wail and the glare of the cherries bleeds into view is simply incomparable. **GABE GRAZIANI**



Not only is the framerate much more smooth, but the car models look better, too.

PSM SCORE 8.5

ROAD WARRIOR
+Shiny cars, blinding speed, donut-munchers in the rear-view... what's not to love?

ROAD KILL
-Limited races... and those spike strips that The Man uses to keep you down.

PSP SKI

PSP

SSX On Tour

Same price, different game

SSX for PSP isn't quite as good as its full-sized counterpart, although we like seeing the *SSX 3* courses.

PSM SCORE 6.0

SNOW DAY
+The game has great control, courses from *SSX 3*, Wi-Fi play

SNOWED IN
-Bare bones presentation, lack of speed, music causes slowdown.

+PUBLISHED BY EA **+ MADE BY** EA **+ HOW MUCH?** $49.99 **+ ESRB** Everyone **+MULTIPLAYER** 4-player WWi-Fi Ad-hoc **+ DIFFICULTY** Average **+ SUPPORTS** Wi-Fi play

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Directions. Fill in the Mystery Word Grid with words going across that spell out the Mystery Word down the side. Hint: use the Mystery Word Clue.

In the future. For each contest there will be four more puzzles at $2.00 each and one much tougher final at $1.00 which will be sent to you by mail. You will have 3 weeks to solve each puzzle. We don't know how many will play but typically 55% will have the highest score possible score to Phase I, 43% to Phase II, 36% to Phase III, and 32% to Phase IV. Highest score in the final determines the winner. If players are still tied they will split the value of the grand prize they are playing for.

Mystery Word Grid

	H				___	MYSTERY
		E			___	
P	I	N	C	H	W	
	R				___	WORD
S					___	

WORD LIST and LETTER CODE chart

PINCH .....W	PRESS.....K	BLAST .....A	WRECK .....D
BREAK .....Z	PUNCH .....S	SPRAY C	TURBO.....V
STOMP .....T	STAND.....R	PRESS.....E	DREAM....O
CRUSH.....I	SCORE .....H	SLANT L	CHASE.....P

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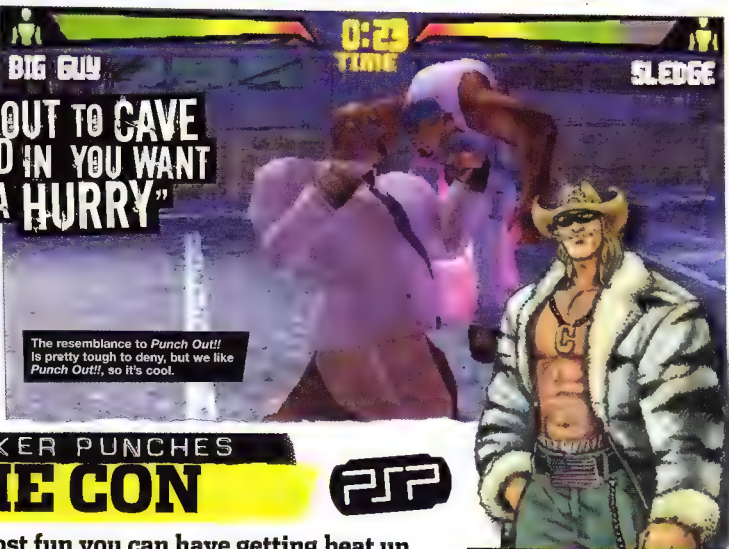
Verifiable retail value of the prize packages as follows: Media Rig Contest package $7,012.00 core components shown, bonus options $3,449.00, cash options $1,250.00. Computer Contest package $2,500.00 for computer, bonus options $2,337.00, cash options $1,250.00. Video Game Contest $700.00 for systems shown, $3,549.00 bonus options, $1,250.00 cash options.

"WHEN YOU'RE OUT TO CAVE SOMEONE'S HEAD IN YOU WANT TO DO IT IN A HURRY"



The resemblance to *Punch Out!!* is pretty tough to deny, but we like *Punch Out!!*, so it's cool.

The art style in this game is gritty and rugged. Don't expect to see many girls who look like the *Dead or Alive* ladies.

SUCKER PUNCHES

THE CON

THE CON

PUBLISHED BY Sony CE

MADE BY Think&Feel Inc.

HOW MUCH? $39.99

ESRB RATING Teen

MULTIPLAYER 2 player versus

DIFFICULTY Average

SUPPORT
+Ad hoc multiplay
+Game sharing

The most fun you can have getting beat up

The Con gives players a stylish and funky, if graphically sparse, chance to select or create an alter ego, choosing everything from fighting style (even creating custom combos) to cheekbone placement, then conquer an underground fighting league.

It's not just about the prestige, though — it's about the money. You decide how far into your match to place your bet. Then, you can take a few dramatic punches early (increasing the odds against you), then stage a comeback after the odds lock, raking in the bling. Or, if you're favored, bet on the other guy, put up a good show early, then take a dive for the cash.

You'd better be convincing, though: if the crowd realizes you're faking, you'll get no winnings at all. In fact, they may doubt you even when you're legit. Between fights you'll recover, buy unlockable power-ups, and train your fighters, upgrading their stats.

You'll also spend a fair amount of time just waiting, thanks to atrocious load times. When you're out to cave someone's head in, you want to do it in a hurry, not wait a full minute.

The fighting feels a bit thin, more like *Punch-Out!!*, and your opponents seem suspiciously precognitive, but the money aspect adds some depth. *The Con* is simple fun — if you've got patience. **CAMERON LEWIS**

It's not that the graphics are ugly; it's just that they're ugly *and* take forever to load.

PSM SCORE 6.5

UPPERCUTS
+Custom combos, betting elements, strategic fighter healing and training.

BELOW THE BELT
−Unforgivably long load times, supremely ugly females, dubious enemy fighter AI.

QUICK HITS

NBA 06

Just as Mike Tyson is less insane than Charles Manson, *NBA 06* is improved from its launch day predecessor, but it's still troubled.

Actually, "sim" is the wrong word. *'06* is an arcade-like sideshow. Players zoom up and down the court at light speed, leaving you very little chance to call plays. The breakneck pace hampers the realism, but at least it's all 60fps.

On the plus side, the mini-games again outshine the core game, with Dodgeball and Horse added. These are especially fun in multiplayer, but now that *NBA Live's* out and on fire, this one's on the trade block. **RYAN MCCAFFREY**

The competition has entered the building, so it's going to be tough for *NBA '06* to remain on the court.

PSM SCORE 6.0

POSTSEASON
+Mini-games; good commentary; shooting mechanic is improved.

PRESEASON
−Nothing simulation-y about it; moves way too fast; player bodies look weird.

+**PUBLISHED BY** SCEA + **MADE BY** SCEA + **HOW MUCH?** $39.99 + **ESRB RATING** Everyone
+**MULTIPLAYER** 2 player online or Wi-Fi + **DIFFICULTY** Adjustable + **SUPPORTS** Ad-hoc multiplay

Gretzky NHL '06

Back at the PSP launch, *Gretzky's* chuggy framerate was its Achilles' heel. The *'06* version is smoother... barely.

It doesn't help that the CPU makes a dizzying number of passes around the offensive zone and the default camera doesn't let you see who's around to pass to. Switch to "Traditional" view. Also, as with its PS2 counterpart, a disturbing majority of the goals will clang in off of a post. The fighting engine is super basic, too. While decent overall and marginally better than its launch day predecessor, it's not worth another $40 in the same calendar year. **RYAN MCCAFFREY**

This *Gretzky* is better, but still tough to follow, especially in a moving vehicle.

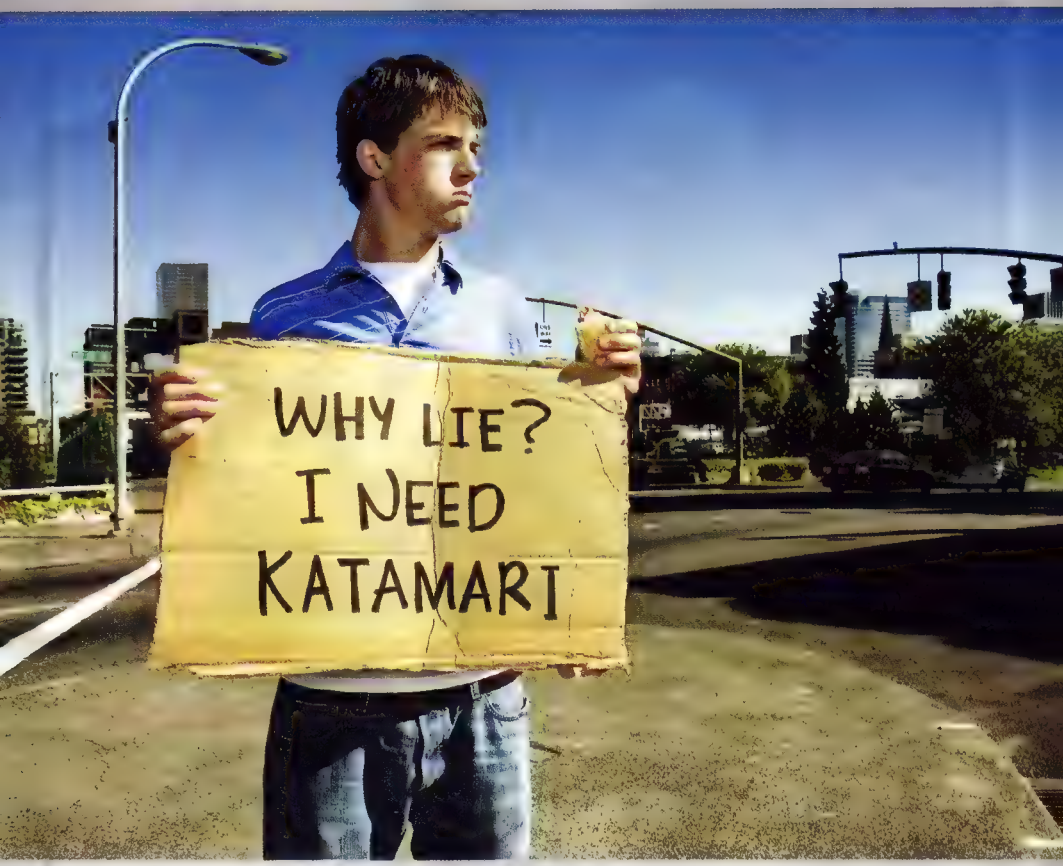
PSM SCORE 6.5

PACKED ARENAS
+Playing as The Great One; broad multiplayer suite; decent graphics.

LOCKOUTS
−Animation still sluggish; default camera isn't the best; clang-y goals; lame fighting.

+**PUBLISHED BY** SCEA + **MADE BY** Page 44 Studios + **HOW MUCH?** $39.99 + **ESRB RATING** Everyone + **MULTIPLAYER** 2 player online or Wi-Fi + **DIFFICULTY** Adjustable + **SUPPORTS** Multiplay

game crazy
We understand.™



TAPPED OUT?

Being broke is no joke, but you shouldn't have to sell your precious bodily fluids for game money. Hit Game Crazy for the best deal on trades and used games.

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SUPER PSM

THUNDERDROME!

For **Chris Slate,** videogames aren't just a job — they're also a great way to impose your iron will upon your humble subjects. Thus, every month, the PSM editors enter the **THUNDERDROME** to prove that they have what it takes to call themselves hardcore... and to appease Chris, who actually wrote a paper in high school about how Smurfs turn into Snorks if you plant them deeply enough and keep the soil moist, but not soggy.

THIS MONTH'S COMBATANTS
Chris Vs. Bill V.

This Month:

Guitar Hero

Choice. To me, my minions! It is time once again for the drome to thunder with the sounds of cheering crowds, to be lit by the light of a thousand lighters, and for the Great Slate to find himself forced to dodge women's undergarments, and sometimes women themselves!

Bill: Did I hear someone say women's undergarments? Don't make me remind you clowns that we're all legally required to wear men's undergarments, ever since Chris' whole "panty ninja" thing...

Chris: Fear not, short, cranky guy with a scary gun collection! The panties will not be our own, but those of our fans. For today... we ROCK! *Guitar Hero* has arrived, and The Great Slate thought it fitting to put on a concert. Grab your costumes. The Great Slate gets to be Prince.

Bill bangs out The Ramones "I Want To Be Sedated"

Bill: Okay, so how does this work?

Eric: Well, you'll notice that the interface is just like *Frequency,* so these different colored jewels scroll down the screen, and that these five buttons on the controller are the same color as the jewels ... are you with me so far?

Bill: Yes, I learned colors in kindergarten. Get to the point.

Eric: Well, you actually play guitar, right? Just consider these five buttons up here your frets, and this lever thingy down on the bottom substitutes for your strings. When you see a jewel falling, just hold down the fret button of the corresponding color and "strum" the lever at the moment when the jewel hits that sort of circle thing at the bottom of the screen. I think it actually feels a lot like playing a real guitar.

Bill: Okay, I got it. So, what's the deal with those star-shaped jewels?

Eric: They're basically a power-up. When you hit a sequence of those perfectly, your Star Meter goes up.

Bill: That sounds a lot like the real Ramones.

Eric: Yeah, the sound-alikes in this game are actually really good most of the time, better than those in *Karaoke Revolution.* The singer's lips sync well with the lyrics, too.

Chris kills Sum 41's "Fat Lip"

Chris: The Great Slate already knows, but as a test of your knowledge: what does this odd metal bar down here at the bottom do?

Eric: That's the tremolo bridge, also known as a whammy bar. In the real world, you can use it to bend a note, making it sound higher or lower. In the game, you use it when those star-shaped jewels are onscreen. Once you've struck the note, you can press the whammy bar down and squeeze a little more juice out of the note. Builds up your Star Meter faster.

Chris: Then what?

Eric: It's a secret.

Chris: Bah! The Great Slate needs not your advice. Now, watch in amazement as he plays with his teeth ... Ouch! That is, while he sets the guitar on fire ...

Bill: Don't even think about it. Remember the Great Slate Microwave Popcorn Fire of '02?

Chris: You two are a serious buzzkill. But no matter! Instead, the Great Slate will dazzle all by playing while holding the guitar behind his back and over his head!... urk... little help?

Eric aces White Zombie's "Thunderkiss '65"

Eric: Okay, I can't wait any more! Let me play! Man, this reminds me of my days in college. Check it out: I've got the t-shirt from one of the bands I was in when I was in college, I'm wearing the leather jacket I used to wear in college ...

Justin: Wait. So, I'm stuck in this "cabaret biker" getup, and you're wearing what is basically an Eric costume?

Eric: An Eric *in college* costume, yes. But I wasn't blonde. That was just a dream.

Justin: Just play, before I get freaked out.

Bill: Hey! You're doing hammer-ons and pull-offs, just like with a real guitar?

Eric: Trying to, yeah. Hammer-ons, in which you strike one note and then use just your fingers to "hammer on" the next notes, are a bit easier. The timing on pull-offs, when you strum and then release the buttons, is tougher. But yeah, there are a few real techniques that work well. You'll notice that I'm also strumming with both down strokes and up strokes and playing with...

Bill: A real guitar pick? Okay, that's too much. Get a life, kid.

Eric: A nice heavy one, yeah. But I can't talk now. My Star Meter is full. Now, I strike a pose so that the guitar is vertical... and now I'm getting a huge points bonus as long as I don't make any mistakes. Face it fellas... I shoulda been a rock star.

Chris: Verily, a headliner is you! Will you sign my breast?

Bill: Whoa! I think that's about enough. Get back to work, all of you ... but leave that game plugged in. They don't call me the best old punk rock guitarist in Oakland for nothin'...

PSM HOLIDAY CHALLENGE

RULES You can only send an entry for one challenge. If you cheat or use codes, you'll be disqualified and bring shame upon your house. The final contest entry will be accepted on February 1st. If there are multiple qualifying entries, the winner will be decided by the best paragraph that explains why you should the winner. Send a photo or a videotape (non-returnable) proving you've met the challenge, and your short paragraph explaining why you're the winner. *Sorry, no e-mail entries!* This contest is open only to residents of the United States, age 18 years or older. PSM reserves the right to substitute prizes of equal or greater monetary value, if necessary.

SEND YOUR ENTRIES TO:
PSM Holiday Challenge #
(the challenge you're entering)
c/o Future Network USA,
150 North Hill Drive, Ste. 40
Brisbane, CA 94005

Challenge #1: SOULCALIBUR 3
Defeat the Chronicles of the Sword mode and show us that you've done it.

ChaDenge #2: Taito Legends
Send us your highest scores on the following games: Zoo Keeper, Space Invaders, and Elevator Action.

Challenge #3: Dragonball Z: Budokai Tenkaichi
Win the Ultimate Battle mode. Come on, you know you're going to anyhow. Might as well win something for it.

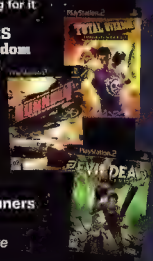
SEPTEMBER WINNERS
Coliseum: Road to Freedom
Shara Chillemi, Manchester, NH

Death Jr.
Daniel Farr, Yakima, WA

NCAA Football 06
Zachary Miller, Harriman, TN

This month's winners: MUSIC LOVERS

This month's winners will receive:
Burnout Revenge
Total Overdose
Evil Dead: Regeneration



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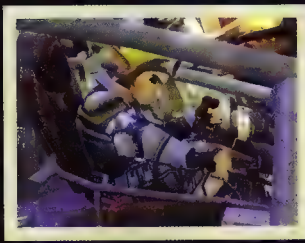
Caption Contest

Make us laugh, win a prize!

Think you're funny? Then write down a caption for this screen and e-mail it to us at psm@futurenetworkusa.com, with the subject line "105 Caption Contest!" Or, simply send it to us through the SuperPlay section of our website at **psmonline.com**. The deadline is January 1st. If we choose your caption as the funniest, it'll net you a PSM Prize Package. Include your full name and mailing address, or your loot gets sent to The Spoiler.



Caption Contest Winners

August Issue Winner:
Mateo Vengoechea, Miami, FL

"Timmy never liked it when uncle Bruce picked him up from school."

September Issue Winner:
Jason Fiorito, Alpharetta, GA

"Braaaains... Braaaai — Hey! Funnel cakes!"

CHEATER, CHEATER!

Ratchet: Deadlocked

Cheat Name	Skills Points Needed
HUD Color	5
Gangsta Guns	10
Mirrored World	15
Remove Helmet	20
Exterminator Bot Heads	25
Super Bloom	35
Super Morphing Freeze Wrench	45
Weather	60
Kill Qwark!	105
Colorblind	120
Morph Mod on Vehicles	140
Ninja Mode All Exterminator Cards needed	

Skin Name	Stars Needed
Marauder Armor	Free
Avenger Armor	Free
Crusader Armor	Free
Vindicator Armor	Free
Liberator Armor	Free
Alpha Clank	Free
"The Muscle"	25
Vernon	30
King Claude	30
Landshark	35
Squidzor	40
Kid Nova	45
W3RM	55
Starshield	60
Venus	75

Ultimate Spider-Man

Cheats must be entered in the Controller Screen (under Options) with either the D-pad or left analog stick. There is a sound if you entered the code correctly. Cheats are not saved to the memory card and do not persist after reboot.

→↓→↓←↑←→
All characters in the viewer
↑→↓←↓↑→←
All landmarks
←←→←↑←←↓
All comic covers
↓↓↑↓↑←←
All concept art

Conflict: Global Terror

Unlock the cheat menu
□□□□○○○
Unlock Extreme mode difficulty
Complete the game on Normal

Karaoke Revolution Party

Unlock All Outfits
R↓○←□R
Unlock All Songs
R□○→RL

Gretzky NHL 06

From the Main Menu, select "Features", then select "Challenges", then select "Unlockables".

On the Unlockables page, enter ↑↓←→○○▶, which should bring up the virtual keyboard. Use the keyboard to enter the following codes:

logry zeda
Wayne Gretky circa 1987 becomes playable skater. Sign him to your team using the Pro Manager

etsw tcaso eynwa
Wayne Gretzky circa 1994 becomes playable skater. Sign him to your team using the Pro Manager

raetdhs fo pschma
1979 Oilers home jersey

sooh
1999 Rangers away jersey

kngi aywen
1994 Kings home jersey

mliedd fo cnaada
1990 Winnipeg Jets home jersey

oyns rusle
Team SCEA (hidden development team)

eht rctihacte
Page 44 Team (hidden development team)

Midway Arcade Treasures 3

Hydro Thunder
Boost Jump
After picking up some boost jumps, you can do a special jump without the ramp.
Hold □ Release Hold □⊗□

Offroad Thunder: Mud, Sweat and Gears
No Catch-up code 313

Rush the Rock: Alcatraz Edition
Cycle thru 3 sets of Cars
Press View 1 while on the Car Selection screen.

San Francisco Rush 2049
Car Collisions
Hold □+□ R◎ Release □□
Auto Abort
⊗L□R□○□+□⊗R.

Disney's Chicken Little

Glove Ball, Glove Ball, Baseball Helmet, Baseball Helmet
Sunglasses
Chicken Little wears sunglasses instead of his regular glasses.

Baseball Hat, Baseball Hat, Jersey, Jersey
Underpants
Chicken Little is in his underwear instead of pants. This only applies for the level that the code is entered.

Bat, Jersey, Jersey, Ball
Feather Cloud
A feather cloud trails behind Chicken Little when he moves.

Suzuki TT Superbikes

On the "MAIN MENU" press the following button combination to access the cheat keyboard:

□□□□□□□□.

Enter the following to enable the cheats:
BORN FREE
Unlock all events
COLORED HIDE
Unlock all leathers
COUCH POTATO
Unlock all collection book
ROCKETS
Unlock all bikes
SKID LIDS
Unlock all helmets
SUNDAYSUNDAY
Unlock Red Bull Mad Sunday events
TIRE CITY
Unlock all wheels
THE KING
Activates all cheats and unlocks all items in the game.

CONTINUED NEXT MONTH
For more codes, hints, and strategies, go to www.cheatplanet.com.

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WARNING! READ AT YOUR OWN RISK!

SALLY BLUM OF CHICAGO HAS ASKED ME TO APPEAR *WITHOUT* MY SPOILER COSTUME. VERY WELL, SALLY...

INSTEAD, THIS MONTH I'M WEARING MY HALLOWEEN COSTUME ...ZORRO!

HA! The SPOILER strikes again!

THE SPOILER PAGE

Hello PSM readers, and welcome to The Spoiler page! I am your host, The Spoiler, a man who does not know the meaning of the word "churl"... nor the definitions of the words "secret" or "taboo." Here, game stories will be revealed with nothing withheld: who lives, who dies, how it ends... anything at all. So BE WARNED! If you read this page, you may learn something you *didn't* want to know...

THE END - EVIL SUMBITCH

Choose to become the new lord of the vampires, and your ve got some loose ends to tie up.

In this room lies the end of one world, and the beginning of another. I'm here for the beginning of another. I'm come this far to throw Mr. sour away at least. Not for the he

With the Prism in her grasp, Tala's power has grown considerably. But she hasn't got an army of minions at her back. Jericho plucks those keep my wings in short order.

With her dying breath, Tala tells Jericho "I would've loved your Sc her dismal, double-crossing, blood sucking, black heart beats after all Save it for the fiery pit, sweetheart.

The curse is lifted. Cassidy's angelic form sprouts wings and is released from the plane. Jericho, once again mortal, rides off under a clear and starry sky.

THE END - GOODY TWO-SHOES

Choose to break the curse of the west, and Tala takes the throne vacated by Lazarus.

Time is where Lazarus becom immortal, and Tala has serious ying-tiem plans for the two of you. Cassidy, sorry disappoint in her poorly chosen savior stands in their way.

Mad with newfound power, Jericho turns on Tala, feeding on her carotid until her blood covers the floor. With a swirl, he flings his Darkwatch badge to the ground,

Cassidy, good work. Jericho's power, his desire to wrong- Where all this power was when you were surrounded by undead thought. I'm those triggers. And make this dove cry.

Jericho awakens as the new lord of the Vampires, and rides Shadow into a blood-red moon as an unsuspecting world sleeps. Bliss- fully unaware of its own demise.

BLOOD SUCKERS!

DARKWATCH: CURSE OF THE WEST

To be or not to be... a vampire lord!

We meet the outlaw/would be train robber Jericho Cross just before his world goes pear-shaped. Blowing open the train car vault reveals not gold, but instead a vampire king, Lazarus Malkoth. His release earns Jericho a bite to the neck and sets off a shockwave that rouses an undead army. Enter Cassidy, a smokin' hot cowgirl from Darkwatch — sort of an Old West secret service. She drafts the now half-vampire Jericho into the Darkwatch before being brutally dispatched by Lazarus.

However, Cassidy's ghost guides Jericho to the Citadel, where he learns that Darkwatch isn't the pure bastion of good it pretends to be: General Clay Carkwright uses civilians as distractions and bait, and the dark, voluptuous agent Tala executes townsfolk she deems undesirable. Still, it beats getting gnawed to death by the undead.

Newly baptized Agent 000, Jericho blazes a bloody trail across the Arizona territory, even recovering the lost Deadlight Prism, an artifact that allows vampires to remain powerful in day-light. But one night, Lazarus encounters Tala, who betrays the Darkwatch by offering her neck to the vampire. Then, the now vampiric beogotch guides his forces to the Citadel itself, where Lazarus fuses with the Prism.

After battling through a ravaged vision of Hell on Earth, Jericho at last confronts and defeats Lazarus. Now, for the ladies...

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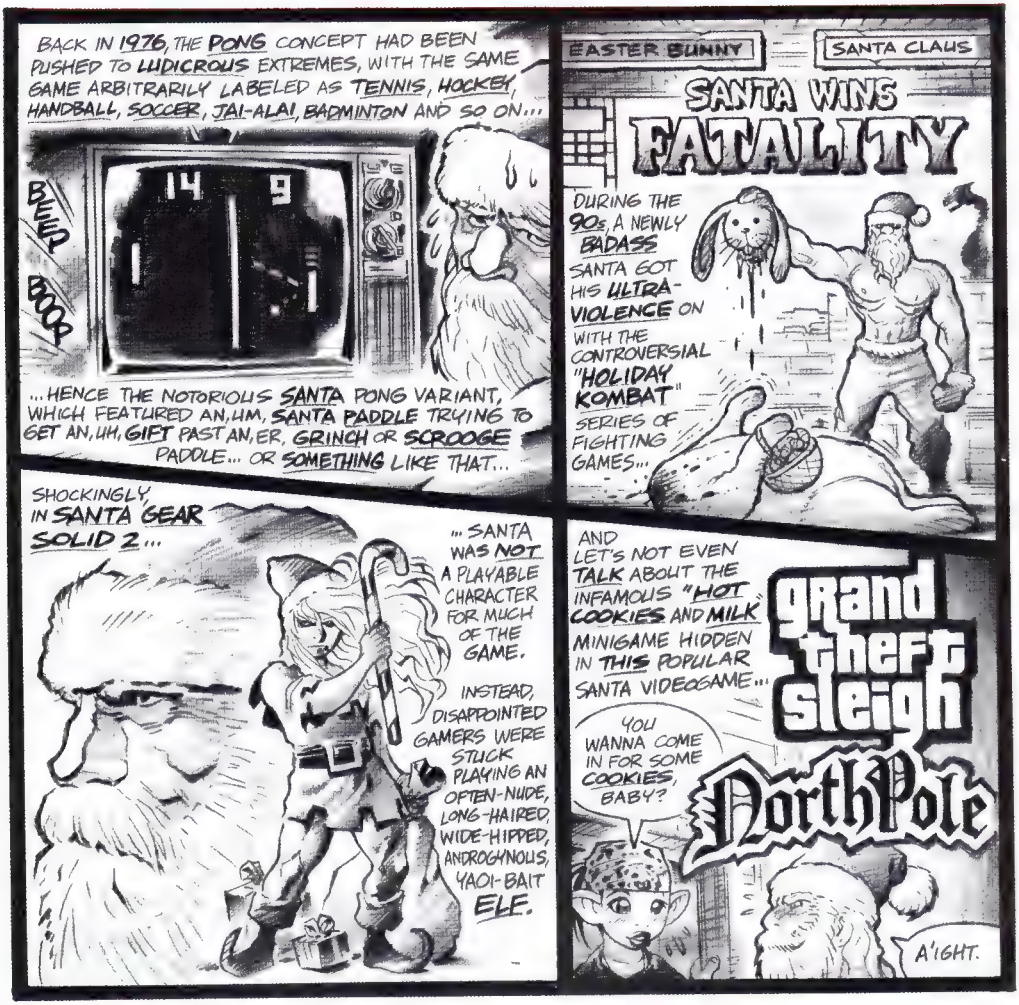
ENDPAGE

Little-Known Santa Games

Ol' Saint Nick is the *original* videogame stud. Don't remember? Take a look... by ADAM WARREN


BACK IN 1976, THE PONG CONCEPT HAD BEEN PUSHED TO LUDICROUS EXTREMES, WITH THE SAME GAME ARBITRARILY LABELED AS TENNIS, HOCKEY, HANDBALL, SOCCER, JAI-ALAI, BADMINTON AND SO ON...
BEEP
BOOP
14
9
...HENCE THE NOTORIOUS SANTA PONG VARIANT, WHICH FEATURED AN, UM, SANTA PADDLE TRYING TO GET AN, UH, GIFT PAST AN, ER, GRINCH OR SCROOGE PADDLE... OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT...
EASTER BUNNY
SANTA CLAUS
SANTA WINS
FATALITY
DURING THE 90s, A NEWLY BADASS SANTA GOT HIS ULTRA-VIOLENCE ON WITH THE CONTROVERSIAL "HOLIDAY KOMBAT" SERIES OF FIGHTING GAMES...
SHOCKINGLY, IN SANTA GEAR SOLID 2...
...SANTA WAS NOT A PLAYABLE CHARACTER FOR MUCH OF THE GAME.
INSTEAD, DISAPPOINTED GAMERS WERE STUCK PLAYING AN OFTEN-NUDE, LONG-HAIRED, WIDE-HIPPED, ANDROGYNOUS, YAOI-BAIT ELF.
AND LET'S NOT EVEN TALK ABOUT THE INFAMOUS "HOT COCOA AND MILK" MINIGAME HIDDEN IN THIS POPULAR SANTA VIDEOGAME...
grand theft sleigh
North Pole
YOU WANNA COME IN FOR SOME COOKIES, BABY?
A'IGHT.

NEXT ISSUE

Buckle up, 'cause 2006 is gonna be a **wild ride** for PlayStation fans, and it starts **NEXT ISSUE!** What's next in the evolution of the **PSP**? What's left for **PS2** gamers to look forward to? And what's the deal with *everything* regarding **PlayStation 3**? Until now we've had mostly questions, but next month we start getting some serious **answers** with the help of the world's top game makers. **PlayStation Preview 2006** hits in just four weeks!

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U.S. NAVY SEALS

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Up against the most skilled Special Ops force ever assembled, enemies can run but they can't hide. Welcome to the world of the U.S. Navy SEALs, where stealth, intelligence and teamwork are your tools for protecting freedom across the globe. Armed with the best weapons, vehicles, technology and training known to man, you're about to lead your four-man fireteam into some of the most fearsome battles imaginable, penetrating enemy territory and executing tactical strikes with razor-sharp precision. Terror may know no bounds. But neither do the elite warriors of the U.S. Navy SEALs. Ready or not, here they come. Hooyah.

MATURE 17+ M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Blood
Violence

ZIPPER INTERACTIVE
ONLINE ENABLED ONLY
PlayStation.2

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Intense Violence
Blood and Gore
Sexual Themes
Strong Language
Use of Drugs

ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

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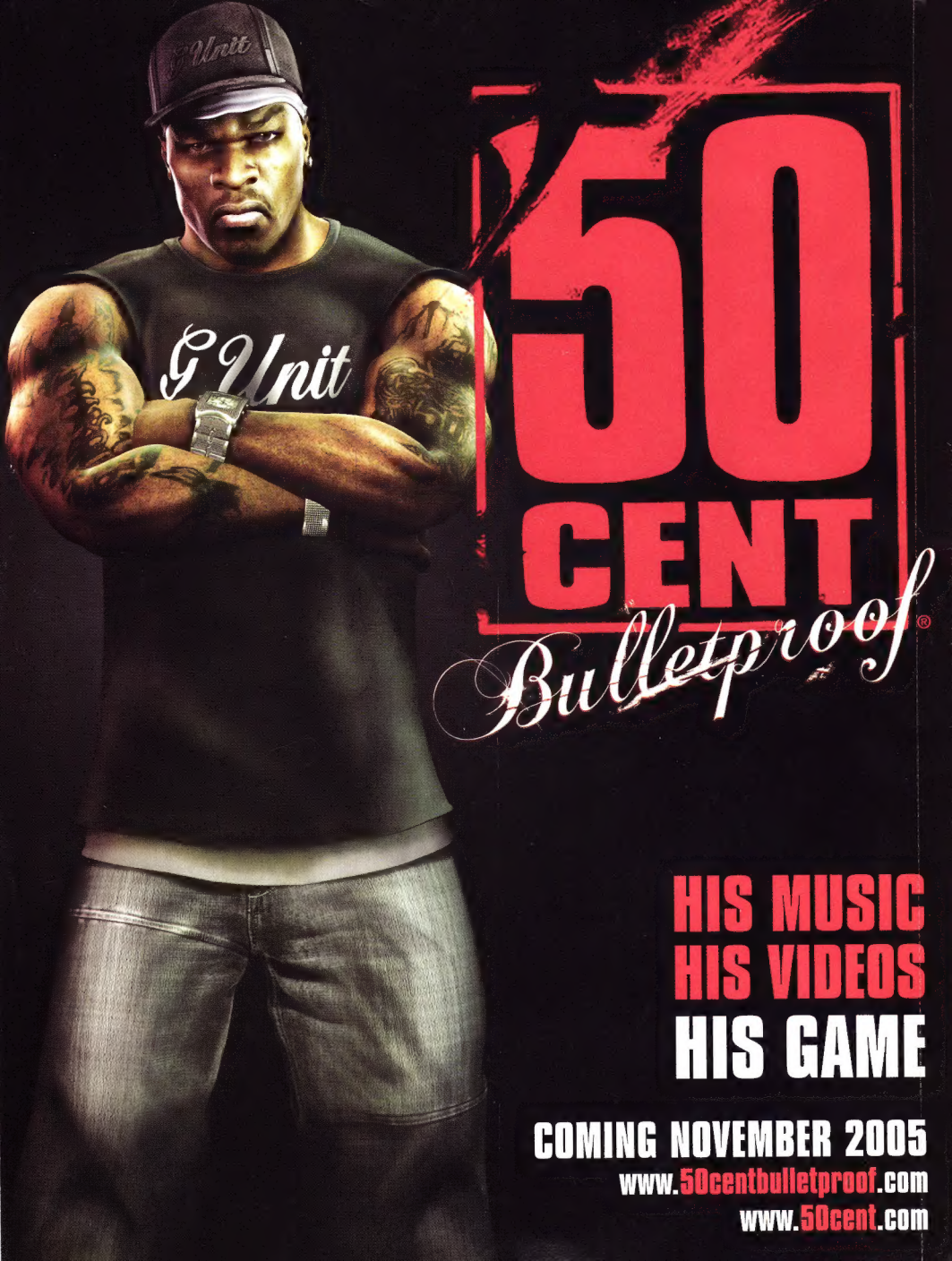
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